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# Letter From the Elders

We are excited that you've taken time to discover more about church membership here at Watermark. As elders at Watermark, it is an honor and a privilege to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you" (1 Peter 5:2). We are encouraged by your faithfulness in seeking to be part of a local church body.

Your church home is God's provision for you: a spiritual family that can support, love, care for, admonish, and encourage you as you walk with Christ. Membership provides you with the community and accountability needed for you to grow and live out God's unique calling and design for your life. Membership also gives you a place where you

can discover your gifts and deploy your unique talents as you serve Christ on mission every day.

We believe church membership is more than attending a class or signing a covenant. It is a call to be the church for each other and to show Christ's love to the people around us. At Watermark, membership includes:

- Living in community with other believers who "stir up one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Faithfully stewarding the gifts God has given you in order to serve others and take part in God's kingdom work (1 Peter 4:10).

 Submitting to the authority of God's Word and to godly leaders whom the Bible says will ultimately give an account for your soul (Hebrews 13:17).

Our success will never be based on the size of our buildings, budget, or weekly attendance, but rather on the depth of our love for one another and the consistency with which we yield to the Spirit.

We count it a sincere privilege and great responsibility to help equip, encourage, care for, and shepherd this body of believers.

The Elders of Watermark Community Church





**Membership Class** 

Before talking about membership at Watermark, it can be helpful to define what "church membership" really means. What is a church, what does it mean to be a member at one, and why does church membership matter?



# What Is a Church?

A common misconception (even in the dictionary) is that a "church" is a building where people gather for worship on Sundays.

The Bible, though, never refers to any "church" as a physical building where people meet. Instead, the "church" is the people themselves, specifically a people who gather. The word in the Bible that is translated as "church" means "assembly." There are several biblical references to "the church in (someone's) house" (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2), but in each instance it says that a church is in the house; it is not the house itself.

The Bible sometimes uses the singular word "church" to refer to a collection of churches in a city or region, or to all churches that are under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Usually, though, the word "church" refers to one of the many local churches that meet in specific towns or houses of worship (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 16:19; etc.). In fact, many of the New Testament letters were addressed to individual churches, instructing them on how to live and worship together. Each local church is led by elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) who teach, shepherd, and care for the members of that church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3).

Simply, the church is a group of people regularly gathered in a specific time and place (Hebrews 10:24-25) for the sake of God's glory and unity with one another under His name (Ephesians 4:1-6).

# What Does It Mean to Be a Member of a Church?

Church membership means more than just attending a church. After all, "outsiders or unbelievers" (1 Corinthians 14:23-25) can attend church services. Simply being inside the building doesn't automatically make someone a church member, and only those who have trusted Christ can be considered a part of His body.

Instead of passively attending a weekly event, church membership means participating in a community to which you belong. God's Word calls Christians to love, serve, honor, instruct, forgive, comfort, care for, encourage, exhort, admonish, submit to, speak the truth to, fellowship with, and live in harmony with one another. The only way to really fulfill all of

the "one another" commands in Scripture (listed on pages 24-25) is for each believer to be a committed, regular, known member of a local church. The "one anothers" require intentional and regular time with other believers.

So, when we talk about being a member of a church, we mean that you have figuratively raised your hand and said, "Yes, I want to commit to this local body of believers. It is where I will deploy the gifts God has given me (1 Peter 4:10; Ephesians 4:11-16), submit to the care and protection of church elders (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5), and gather regularly to worship God with other members (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19)."



# Why Church Membership Matters

The Bible doesn't directly use the term "church member" to describe all of this, but it does say that we are all members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 5:29-30) and members of His household (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 6:10). And although God's Church isn't a literal building, it is a metaphorical one, as we are the building blocks of the house of God (Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 3:6).

These descriptions make it abundantly clear that God intends for us to be in close community with other believers. If you cut off a member of a body, that's like losing an arm or a leg. If you are not a member of a household, that is akin to being homeless or orphaned. And if you remove a building block from a house, the stone loses its purpose while the remaining structure is weakened.

#### To not join a church is to say:

- I don't want to be wedded to Christ (divorced)
- I don't want to be a part of His family (orphaned)
- I don't want to be a part of His body (dismembered)
- I don't want to be a part of His kingdom (exiled)

In other words, what we call "membership" is normal, expected, and healthy for every follower of Christ. It is how God orders our life together with Him and one another.

Church membership is important in every believer's life for several reasons:

#### Care of the Church

Church members are to care for one another in many ways, including bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2) and helping to meet each other's needs (Romans 12:13). The church is to assist its most vulnerable members who have no other family or means to provide for themselves (1 Timothy 5:3-16).

Though we should love and serve all people as we are able, church membership helps define who we are most responsible for and who we should go to first when we need help.

#### **Spiritual Leadership**

The Bible describes church elders as shepherds overseeing a flock (1 Peter 5:1-5). Shepherds exist for the benefit of the flock. God's leaders are to be selfless servants who care for and protect the people in the church (Acts 20:28-31). They are to keep watch over church members' souls and give an account for how they have served the flock (Hebrews 13:17). Elders are to teach God's Word and follow it themselves, providing an example worth imitating (Hebrews 13:7; Titus 1:5-9).

Church membership defines which elders you are shepherded by. Membership also defines which people are within the flock that the elders are accountable for.

#### Correction of the Church

Being corrected when you are wrong is rarely fun, but it is in your own best interests (Hebrews 12:11; Proverbs 15:32). After all, you have to be aware of a problem before you can do anything about it.

Loving correction is one of the roles of the church (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). It is a responsibility all members have for each other. Church membership determines who believers are responsible for shepherding in this way. It is not our job to correct "outsiders," but only fellow believers who are "inside the church" (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

If someone within the church consistently refuses to listen to biblical correction and does not turn away from their sin and back to Christ, even after being approached repeatedly by many fellow church members, it may become necessary to remove them from membership as a last resort (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Even this is to be done out of love, as an effort to warn the person and convince them of the serious need to turn from their destructive ways (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

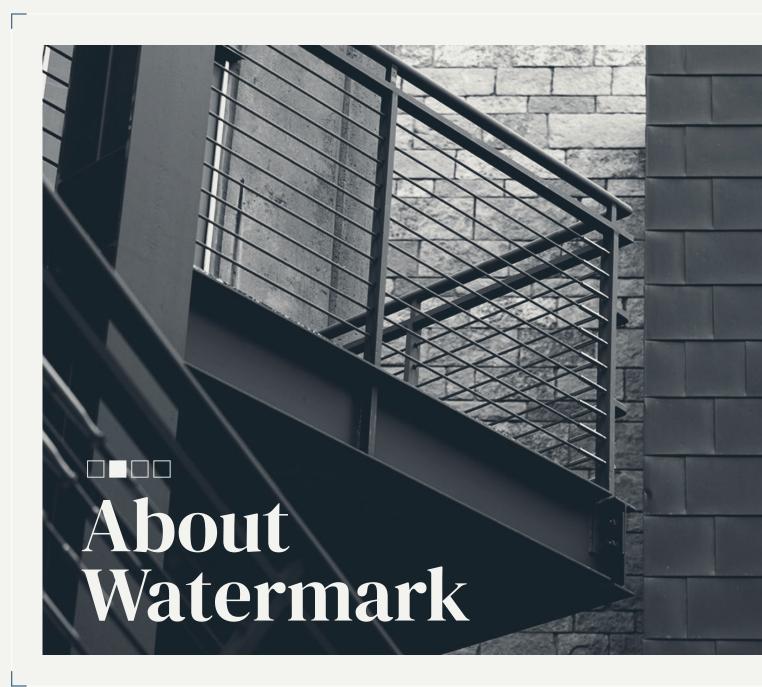
#### Membership Is Part of God's Provision

Being a member of a church is God's expectation for all believers, and it is part of His provision for us—so much so, that not being a church member is considered a strong form of discipline.

We hope you will choose to become a member at Watermark. But, even if you don't, we would encourage you to join another Christ-following church as a member.

#### In a non-committed, self-sufficient, and unreliable world, church membership says:

- I can make and keep commitments
- I am a contributor, not a consumer
- I am not independent; I belong to a body
- I am willing to submit to authority



**Membership Class** 

# **Our Vision**

Watermark's vision is to be people who are "Transformed by Christ, to love like Christ."

"For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)



# **Our Values**

#### Fully Surrendered

We wholly depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit – made available to us through faith in Christ – to entirely transform and continually grow us.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

### Authentic Relationships

We forge deep, authentic relationships and communities in which all people can be fully known and experience the grace and transforming power of Jesus Christ.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

#### Courageous Faith

We live and declare an unashamed allegiance to the biblical, historical, and orthodox truths of the gospel no matter the cost.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" (Romans 1:16-17)

### Missional Living

We deploy our lives, resources, and gifts for God's glory and the advancement of the gospel.

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

ABOUT WATERMARK 15

# **Our Leadership**

In accordance with the model laid out in Scripture, Watermark is led by a team of elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). This team of elders is responsible for overseeing the church and shepherding its members (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-5). Elders are appointed from among the membership after first being vetted to ensure they meet the biblical qualifications for the role (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

You can learn more about the role and responsibilities of elders on pages 42-44.

# **Our History**

In the summer of 1998, a group of friends began to meet and prayerfully consider what it would look like to pursue a life of faithfulness to Scripture as they devoted their lives to Christ together in Dallas.

By the end of 1999, this core group had grown to 150 people who came together to serve Christ and His purposes as Watermark Community Church. The church gathered in a number of temporary locations over the next several years, until the Lord allowed us to purchase a property and build our current facilities.

# **Our Name**

The name "Watermark" was chosen for the church because a watermark represents:

#### Authenticity

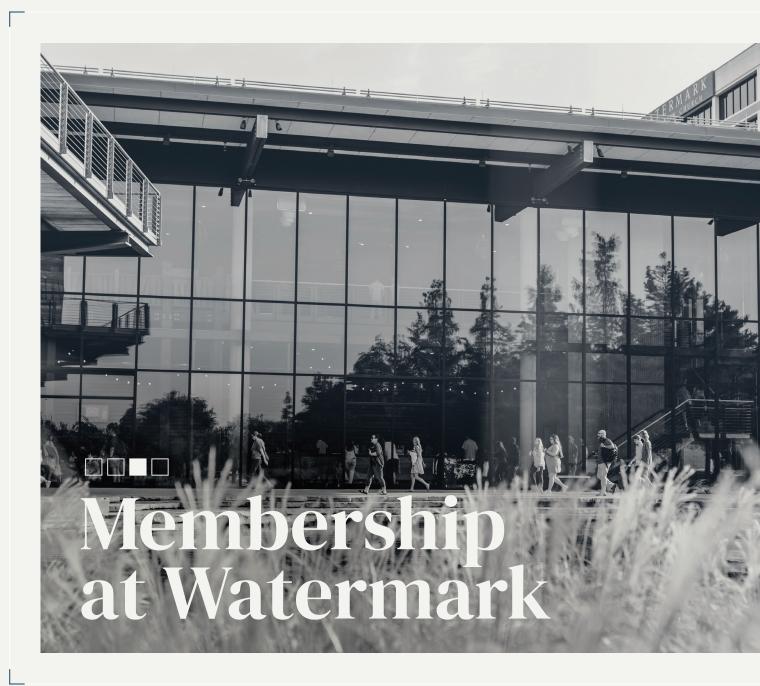
Official documents and printed currency often have watermarks to prove that they are genuine. In the same way, we want to be people whose lives and relationships are marked by authenticity, integrity, and truth. "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (1 Timothy 1:5)

#### Excellence

Fine paper often features a watermark as evidence of its quality. We strive for excellence, without compromise, in all areas of our ministry and lives, believing that excellence honors God and inspires people. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." (Colossians 3:23)

#### A Lasting Impression

The continual presence of water at a certain level leaves a mark long after it is gone. It is our hope, because we have lived faithfully as God's people, that long after we have gone, we would make an impact for His kingdom that would be seen for generations to come. "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all." (2 Corinthians 3:2)





**Membership Class** 

Christians are saved by faith alone, not through any efforts of our own (Galatians 2:16). There is no standard we must meet or tasks we need to perform.

However, that doesn't mean God is done with us at the moment of salvation. We are not immediately made perfect (Philippians 3:12). God is working in us (Philippians 2:12-13) as we strive (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) to live in a way that pleases and honors Him (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12). And though we are not saved through our own works (Ephesians 2:8-9), God has created and prepared us to play a meaningful role in the work He is doing (Ephesians 2:10).

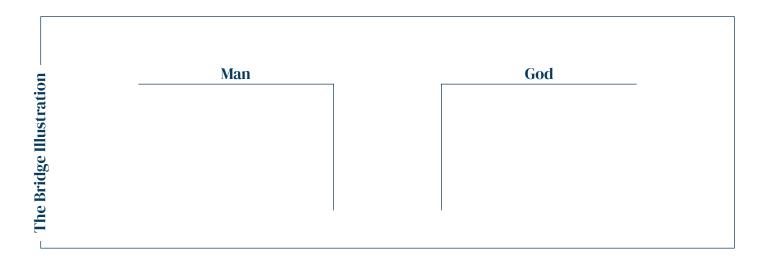
A church should help its members grow in knowledge, faithfulness, Christlikeness, and acts of love. In keeping with our vision and values, Watermark's ministry goals are to help people:

Believe in Christ; Belong to His body; Be trained in truth; and Be strong in a life of ministry and worship.

Because those all begin with a "B," we refer to them as the "4Bs." You can learn more about each one on the following pages.



# **Believe in Christ**



To become a member at Watermark—or a member of God's Church anywhere—a person must first believe in Christ (John 5:24).

Believing in Christ is more than just acknowledging that God exists (James 2:19). Belief is about trust: trusting that Jesus is who He says He is (John 10:24-30); relying on His sacrifice on the cross as the only thing that will save us from the penalty of our sins (John 14:6); and responding to His grace by committing our lives to follow Him (Matthew 16:24-25).

#### What Is the Gospel?

If you have never trusted in Christ for salvation, the most important thing we can share with you is the good news of how you can be saved. And if you have already trusted in Christ, one natural response to God's grace is to help others believe in Christ by clearly explaining the gospel.

So, what is the gospel?

To start with, God created all people in His image (Genesis 1:27) and designed us to live in relationship with Him in paradise. Every good thing comes from God (James 1:17).

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31a)

But then man sinned (Genesis 3:11-13). All of us have sinned and have turned away from God (Psalm 14:2-3). Because God is holy and perfect, He cannot excuse or overlook sin. Any sin separates us from God and His goodness, and it ultimately leads to death (Romans 5:12).

"Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)

BELIEVE IN CHRIST 19

God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for sin on our behalf (Romans 5:8). Though Jesus never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21), He was still sentenced to death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8). He died for our sins (1 Peter 2:24) and then rose from the grave, conquering death forever (Romans 6:9). We can be saved by trusting in His work on the cross.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17)

Though we live in a world that is still broken by sin (John 16:33), God will one day make everything new (Revelation 21:5). Jesus will return to gather His people (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and all who trust in Him will live forever in the presence of God.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

#### Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

#### **Romans 6:23**

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

#### Romans 5:8

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

#### Romans 10:9

"Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

#### Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

# The Romans Road



#### **Sharing Your Testimony**

As part of the membership process, we ask every member to share his or her testimony.

A testimony is your personal account of God's work in your life. It is the story of how you came to trust Christ as your Savior and how your life has changed as a result.

We share testimonies as part of membership for a few reasons:

- We want to get to know you! Your testimony is your story; it is an important part of who you are.
   We'll gladly share our own stories with you, too.
- It lets us celebrate together what God has done and is doing in our lives. Sharing your testimony gives God the glory for your life story and declares your need for Him.
- Sharing your testimony is a natural way to share the gospel. Telling it to another believer allows you to practice in a low-pressure setting.
- Since being a believer is a prerequisite for belonging to a church, sharing testimonies is a way to confirm that each member has trusted in Christ.

At Watermark, we ask all our members to share their stories of grace both verbally and in written form.

- Sharing your story verbally increases your ability to tell of God's goodness in a conversational format. It also gives you an opportunity to share some time with one of the lay leaders at our church and for you to each be encouraged by what God has done.
- Writing out your story helps you better organize your thoughts and learn how to communicate what you believe in a clear and effective way.

#### **How to Share Your Testimony**

Your story is your story; you already know, better than anyone, what has happened in your life. The key to sharing your testimony clearly and effectively is how you organize the telling of your story.

The Apostle Paul's testimony in Acts 26:4-23 provides us with a model of how to give our testimonies. Any believer's story can be organized into three parts:

- Life before you trusted Christ (Acts 26:4-11)
   What was your life like before you began a relationship with Christ? You may want to highlight how it was marked by sin or self-reliance.
- How you came to trust in Christ (Acts 26:12-18)
   What were the circumstances that led you to place your faith in Jesus? Remember to include the gospel in this part: that you are saved from the penalty of sin through Christ's work on the cross.
- Life after you trusted in Christ (Acts 26:19-23)
   Since becoming a believer, what has your life and your relationship with Christ looked like? Life does not become perfect or easy after becoming a believer, but there should be a change in your attitude and actions.

BELIEVE IN CHRIST 21



#### **Baptism**

Baptism is a way to publicly proclaim your faith in Christ. It is not necessary for salvation, because we are saved by God's grace, not through our own efforts. Nevertheless, God's Word assumes that all believers will be baptized (Romans 6:3-4), and followers of Jesus are commanded to baptize new believers as part of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Thus, baptism is an act of obedience to God after being saved.

Importantly, baptism is not an isolated event, but the church participates as well. In baptism, the local church effectively says, "Welcome to the family of God. We are committed to you as you follow Christ with us."

Because of baptism's emphasis in Scripture and our desire to honor Christ in all things, we strongly encourage any member who has not been baptized since becoming a believer to take that step.

You can learn all about baptism—including why, when, and how we baptize at Watermark—in our Baptism Guide on pages 46-47.



#### **Agreeing on the Essentials**

Some truths are made very clear in Scripture and are agreed upon by all Christians throughout all of Church history. For example, all believers affirm the truth of the gospel (pages 18-19), because if someone did not believe the gospel is true, that person would not be a Christian.

But some issues are less clear-cut. The Bible may not speak directly on a particular question, or there may be differing interpretations of what the Bible does say. We must stand firm where the Bible is firm but be flexible where it is flexible.

One of the responsibilities of church elders is to give instruction in sound doctrine and protect against false teachers (Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 4:1-4). As part of that effort, and to clarify what we believe, Watermark's elders have written a Doctrinal Statement for the church, which can be found on pages 37-39. Although a believer in Christ can be a member at Watermark and disagree with the church's stance on some nonessential issues, we think it is necessary for all members to agree on the core doctrinal beliefs found on pages 37-39.

BELONG TO HIS BODY 23

# **Belong to His Body**

Belonging to a body of believers is the defining mark of church membership. If you are a member, then you are a part of the church body; and if you don't belong to the body, then you are not a member.

As mentioned on pages 10-11, belonging to the body of Christ is considered normal and healthy for every believer. It is how God created us to live and is part of His provision for us.

The fact that it is referred to as a "body" implies a deep level of connection. All members of a body both support and are supported by the other members (Ephesians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27). All members play important roles in the functioning of the body.

Belonging to His body means practicing the "one anothers" of Scripture with God's people (see pages 24-25). It includes attending faithfully; praying for the church's health and impact; dealing biblically with conflict; following the leadership's care and vision; and committing to be fully known, encouraged, and cared for in community as we grow in love for God and others.

#### **Community Groups**

Practically speaking, there are limits to how many people you can really know and be known by. It is hard to know how you can best encourage, care for, pray for, comfort, serve, and instruct someone if you don't know who they are, what they need help with, and how God has wired them. It is also difficult for church elders to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock" (Acts 20:28) if there are hundreds or thousands of people under their care.

For these reasons, Watermark asks every member to more closely connect with a small group of other members in a community group. Each community group meets together regularly for fellowship, discipleship, and living out the "one anothers."

#### **Created for Community**

God created us to live in community with others. In community, we have others with whom we can celebrate successes and mourn losses (Romans 12:15). We have help when times are hard (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10) and someone to spur us on if we get complacent (Hebrews 10:24). We can get wise counsel for hard decisions (Proverbs 15:22) and resist the temptation to isolate and hide our own poor choices (Proverbs 18:1). We also sharpen each other and grow in our walks with Christ (Proverbs 27:17).

However, that doesn't mean it is always easy. It does require being intentional about meeting together (Hebrews 10:25) and making time for each other. We must be willing to be honest with each other (Ephesians 4:25) and be open about what is going on in our lives (James 5:16). We have to work through conflict (Matthew 18:15-17) so that we can forgive each other (Colossians 3:13) and maintain peace together (Mark 9:50). It takes some work, but the rewards are worth it.

# Admonish ONE ANOTHER (Colossians 3:16)

Agree with
ONE ANOTHER
(2 Corinthians 13:11)

# Bear the burdens of

ONE ANOTHER (Galatians 6:2)

# **Bear with**

ONE ANOTHER (Ephesians 4:2-3; Colossians 3:13)

# Be at peace with ONE ANOTHER

(Mark 9:50)

# Be humble toward

ONE ANOTHER (1 Peter 5:5)

# Be kind to

ONE ANOTHER (Ephesians 4:32)

# Build up

ONE ANOTHER

(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

# Care for

ONE ANOTHER (1 Corinthians 12:25)

# Comfort

ONE ANOTHER (2 Corinthians 13:11)

# Confess sins to

ONE ANOTHER (James 5:16)

# Do good to

ONE ANOTHER

(1 Thessalonians 5:15)

# Do not envy

ONE ANOTHER (Galatians 5:26)

# Do not grumble against

ONE ANOTHER
(James 5:9)

# Do not judge

ONE ANOTHER

(Romans 14:13)

# Do not provoke

ONE ANOTHER

(Galatians 5:26)

# Do not speak evil against

ONE ANOTHER (James 4:11)

# Encourage

ONE ANOTHER

(1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11; Hebrews 10:25)

# **Exhort**

ONE ANOTHER

(Hebrews 3:13)

# Forgive

ONE ANOTHER

(Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)

# Greet

**ONE ANOTHER** 

(Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14)

# Have fellowship with

ONE ANOTHER

(1 John 1:7)

## Honor

ONE ANOTHER

(Romans 12:10)

# Instruct

ONE ANOTHER

(Romans 15:14)

# Live in harmony with

ONE ANOTHER

(Romans 12:16, 15:5)

## Love

ONE ANOTHER

(John 13:34-35, 15:12, 15:17; Romans 12:10, 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9-10; 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 3:23, 4:7, 4:11-12; 2 John 1:5)

# **Pray for**

ONE ANOTHER

(James 5:16)

## Serve

ONE ANOTHER

(Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10)

# Show hospitality to

ONE ANOTHER

(1 Peter 4:9)

# Sing with

ONE ANOTHER

(Ephesians 5:19)

# Speak the truth to

ONE ANOTHER

(Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9)

# Stir up

ONE ANOTHER

(Hebrews 10:24)

# **Submit to**

ONE ANOTHER

(Ephesians 5:21)

## **Teach**

ONE ANOTHER

(Colossians 3:16)

## Wait for

ONE ANOTHER

(1 Corinthians 11:33)

# Wash the feet of

ONE ANOTHER

(John 13:14)

# Welcome

ONE ANOTHER

(Romans 15:7)



# Shepherding Through Community

Our elders have the distinct responsibility to oversee the body of believers gathered at Watermark. In order to better care for each individual member, we have additional leaders to help carry the shepherding load. Our elders can be directly involved when it's necessary, while smaller matters can be discussed at a community group level or with the help of a staff member or lay leader.

Watermark members are cared for and shepherded by community

group leaders, community shepherds, community directors, and the elders.

- One person (or one married couple) in each community group serves as the group's leader.
- If someone in the group has a question that the leader cannot answer, a need that the group can't meet on their own, or would simply like advice or help in any way, the group's leader can reach out to their community shepherd or community director.
- Community shepherds are members who are trusted and trained to shepherd community groups.
- Community directors are leaders on staff who are responsible for overseeing several community shepherds and dozens of community groups.
- The community directors bring any big question, need, or issue to the elders. They also let the elders know concerns, needs, and ways they can be praying for members of the body (Hebrews 13:17).



BELONG TO HIS BODY 27

#### **Forming Community Groups**

We encourage members to form community groups with other members who are in a similar life stage. For example, women would be in community with other women; men with other men; and married couples with other married couples. Each group should include at least three members (or three married couples who are members).

You can become part of a community group in one of three ways:

- **Start a group organically.** If you have a group of people you'd like to do community with, talk with them about forming a group together.
- Attend Community Formation. Community
   Formation events are regular gatherings where
   you can connect with other Watermark members
   who are also looking to form a community group.
- Join an existing group. If you know of an existing community group you would like to join, talk with the people in the group and see if they would be open to adding you to their group.

The Community Team is always available to help you form or find a community group. When you do start a group or join an existing group, be sure to let the Community Team know.



# Be Trained in God's Truth

It is healthy and good for Christians to continually grow in their understanding of God's Word (Hebrews 5:12-14). We should study the Bible so that we can apply it in our own lives, for "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

One of the purposes of God's Church is to help you grow in your knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. That is why one of our goals for members at Watermark is that each person would be trained in God's truth.

Being trained in truth does not mean that you should already have all the answers or possess a certain level of knowledge. Instead, it means that every member should be in the process of learning. Being trained in truth starts by affirming that the Bible is true; it is the inspired and authoritative Word of God. Being trained in truth also includes consistently reading and studying Scripture on your own, as well as taking advantage of the teaching and equipping resources provided by the church to help you grow in your understanding of God's Word.

#### God's Word Guides All We Do

God is perfect and all-knowing; we are neither of those things. So, we seek to always listen to His wisdom and follow His guidance, which He has given to us through His Word.

At Watermark, the Bible is our authority, conscience, and guide.

Authority	Conscience	Guide

#### The Bible is our authority.

We believe that the Bible is authoritative, and we are called to submit to its direction and counsel. Our leaders yield to its guidance and hold its truth up to everything we do as a church.

#### The Bible is our conscience.

We believe that the Bible tells us the difference between right and wrong. Despite what other influences we might be experiencing (culture, emotions, worldly wisdom, etc.), the Bible communicates God's best in any situation.

#### The Bible is our guide.

We believe that the Bible does not leave us to figure out this life alone. The Scriptures are the key source of guidance and help as we navigate life. We can turn to God's Word to know how to proceed in any situation.

# Be Strong in a Life of Ministry and Worship

All of life is an expression of our ministry and worship to God. Ministry is not something that only full-time pastors do; in fact, the role of church leaders is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:11-12). The saints—all believers in the church—are to do the work of ministry. God has given us gifts that we are to use to serve others (1 Peter 4:10).

Therefore, we encourage all members at Watermark to "be strong in a life of ministry and worship" by faithfully stewarding everything God has entrusted to us.

#### Be Strong in Ministry and Worship Through the Giving of Our Time

God has entrusted each of us with a certain number of hours, months, and years. Being strong in ministry includes stewarding our time for His glory and the good of others. The Bible says that God has already prepared specific "good works" for each of us (Ephesians 2:10). These include many everyday occurrences as well as special opportunities to invest deeply to help others. But all of these "good works" involve spending time.

Because of this biblical calling, Watermark members are asked to commit a portion of their time to serving (generally at least once a month) in a ministry either at Watermark or in the community.

How is it worship? By giving our time to God, we acknowledge God's rule over our calendar and put the needs of others before our own (Mark 10:45).

#### Be Strong in Ministry and Worship Through the Giving of Our Talent

God has provided each of us with unique strengths, experiences, and personal characteristics. Being strong in ministry includes discovering, developing, and stewarding those gifts.

Our gifts may be different, but God's Word assures us that no one's gifts are more important than another's (1 Corinthians 12). We have different gifts so that we can effectively play different roles and thereby meet all the needs of the body.

There are times we should simply meet an urgent need, regardless of how well the opportunity "fits" our gifts. But, in general, we should look for ways to serve with our specific wiring and giftings. That is where we will have the biggest impact and continue to develop our God-given talents.

How is it worship? By giving our talent to God, we put His creative handiwork on display (Psalm 139:13-14) and bring glory to Him in using our gifts to serve instead of gain (Mark 8:36).

#### Be Strong in Ministry and Worship Through the Giving of Our Treasure

God owns everything, and we are simply managers of the material resources He has entrusted to us. Being strong in ministry includes using our finances and other resources to impact others. Watermark members give financially both to the church and to many other ministries throughout our city and around the world.

At Watermark, we do not require members to give financially, and we choose not to pass an offering plate during our services. Instead, people can give online or through the offering boxes at the back of the Auditorium. We don't want people to feel under compulsion to give (2 Corinthians 9:7). We believe giving is a great joy in the life of the believer, as it is active participation in advancing God's mission and glory throughout the earth (Habakkuk 2:14).

How is it worship? By giving our treasure to God, we remind ourselves that we are only stewards of what is already His, and that God is honored by our giving (Proverbs 3:9-10).

#### **Annual Membership Renewal**

Every year, we ask each member to complete the Membership Renewal to reaffirm the Membership Covenant and confirm that they would like to continue participating as a member of Watermark Community Church. The yearly Membership Renewal is an opportunity for members to reflect on how they are doing in four key areas (Believe, Belong, Be Trained, Be Strong), and it helps Watermark leadership prayerfully shepherd the flock of God at Watermark (1 Peter 5:2).

The elders of Watermark count it a sincere privilege and great responsibility to help equip, encourage, care for, and shepherd members of Watermark. Completing the Membership Renewal is just one of the ways members are known, connected, and cared for.

# How to Become a Watermark Member

In order to become a member at Watermark, we ask that you first attend our Membership Class. At the class, you will have an opportunity to share your testimony (see page 20). You will also be able to sign the Membership Covenant (see page 36). The Membership Covenant states that you agree with our beliefs and core values, and that you commit to being a member at Watermark.

At the Membership Class, you can also begin the process of joining a community group with other members (see page 27) and finding a place to regularly serve (see pages 30-31).

Once you are a member, you can confirm that you want to remain a part of the body by completing the Membership Renewal each year (page 32).







**Membership Class** 

In the appendix, you will find Watermark's:

Membership Covenant Doctrinal Statement Governance Baptism Guide



# **Membership Covenant**

Having trusted in Christ alone as my Lord and Savior, and being in agreement with the beliefs and governance of Watermark Community Church, I unite myself with the Watermark family. I commit myself to the Lord and to the other members of this local church:

#### **Believing in Christ...**

- by living life as a fully devoted follower of Christ.
- by affirming the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of God's Word, as well as the other core doctrines found in Watermark's Statement of Beliefs.

#### Belonging to His body...

- by attending faithfully.
- by dealing biblically with conflict and refusing to gossip.
- by following the leadership in submitting myself to the care and correction of leadership should the need arise.
- by praying for its health and impact.
- by warmly welcoming those who visit Watermark and committing myself to community with those who attend.
- by having a community group that will know me and help me as I seek to love God, love believers, and love unbelievers.
- by annually filling out my Membership Renewal.

#### Being trained in God's Truth...

- by committing myself to read, understand, and apply the Bible.
- by availing myself to the tools and resources of the church, which are designed to further my understanding of and deepen my commitment to applying God's Word.
- by preparing myself to give a "ready defense" for my faith based on God's Word.

# Being strong in a life of ministry and worship...

- by serving others in ministry.
- by giving graciously as God has graciously given to me.
- by developing relationships with non-believers.
- by sharing my story of grace with others.
- by praying for the salvation of non-believers with whom I have a relationship.

# **Doctrinal Statement**

#### **Section 1: The Bible**

We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 17:17).

### **Section 2: The Trinity**

We believe there is one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are each God, and that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are each a distinct person (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; see also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; Acts 5:3-4).

#### Section 3: Jesus Christ

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God, fulfill prophecy, and redeem sinful man. We believe He accomplished our redemption through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, His burial, and His bodily resurrection. We believe our redemption and salvation are guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is the only means of salvation (John 1:1; 14; 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26; 4:25; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Timothy 2:5).

We believe that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth, and the Head of the Church. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God where, as High Priest to His people, He serves as our Advocate

and intercedes for us (Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:3: 3:1: 7:23-25: 1 John 2:1-2).

### Section 4: The Holy Spirit

We believe God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He dwells in all who believe in Jesus. From the moment of belief in the Son, the Spirit baptizes believers into the body, seals them for salvation, regenerates them to new life, bestows spiritual gifts on each one, and is fully present to continually fill (control and guide) His own (John 16:7-11; John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Some gifts of the Holy Spirit, however, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of miraculous healing, were given to certain individuals as authenticating signs for the early church (Acts 8:14; 10:44-48; 11:15-18; 19:1-6) and not as final evidence of God's presence in a believer's life nor as confirmations of a "second blessing" or subsequent filling of the Spirit. Furthermore, we believe the gift of tongues in the New Testament always presents itself as a known language (Acts 2:6-13) and not as a private prayer language.

### Section 5: Angels, Fallen and Unfallen

We believe angels are spiritual beings who were created as sinless personalities and that they occupy different orders and ranks. They presently exist in both fallen and unfallen states, the former including Satan and his angels (Hebrews 1:13-14; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 7:12).

We believe Satan, by his own choice the enemy of God and His people, is the originator of sin that led our first parents into sin and now rules as "the god of this world." We believe he was judged at the cross and that ultimately he will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Isaiah 14:12-14; Genesis 3:1-19; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).

#### Section 6: Man

We believe man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God, but that man sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his posterity (Genesis 1:27; 2:17; 3:19). Man can do nothing to merit God's favor, and as such, is in need of salvation (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23). We believe that mankind's sinful nature is rebellious toward God and His good design for life and worship (Romans 1:20-24; Ephesians 2:1-3). Mankind's rebellion causes confusion about good and evil, and harm to people, ultimately ending in judgment, despair, and death (Genesis 1:31; Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; James 1:13-15).

We believe God created mankind in His image, forming each person in the womb from conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5) until the point of death when they breathe their last (Genesis 25:8; Luke 23:46); and assigning gender to His people, male (man) and female (woman), as He created them sexually and biologically different, but with equal personal dignity and value (Genesis 1:26-28).

We believe that God ordained marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18; Matthew 19:4-9; Ephesians 5:31-33). Those who accept and live within God's design for sex, biological

gender, and marriage experience the blessing of His good design (Psalm 1:1-3; 128:1-4), and decisions to change, alter, or modify God's will in marriage, sex, or gender are part of man's brokenness and lead to despair (Romans 1:21-22; James 1:13-15).

We believe that God loves and pursues mankind despite our rebellion (Romans 5:8). He offers forgiveness, healing, and abundant life to anyone who turns to Him in humility (John 3:17; 10:10; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

#### Section 7: Salvation

We believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10). We believe that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation and that no one is saved apart from a conscious and personal decision to trust in Christ as his or her one and only Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-10). We believe all true believers elect of God, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Romans 8:1; 29-30; 38-39; John 10:27-30).

#### **Section 8: Sanctification**

We believe sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is positional, progressive, and ultimate. Positionally, it is already complete since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. Since the Christian retains his sinful nature, however, there is need for progressive sanctification whereby he grows in grace by the power of the Spirit. Ultimately, the child of God will be set apart from sin in his practice (as he is now in his position in Christ)

when he is taken to be with Christ and shall be like Him (John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10; 14).

#### Section 9: The Church

We believe the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism, made up of all born-again persons of this present age. We believe the Church began at Pentecost and that a believer is placed into the Church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. We believe the Church is distinct from Israel (Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 10:32).

We believe the local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality for the purposes of worship, study of the Word of God, observance of the ordinances, Christian fellowship, equipping for and practice of kingdom service, specifically stewarding our lives for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-13; Matthew 16:18; 28:19-20).

# Section 10: The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which are to be observed by believers until He returns (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

We believe by water baptism a believer publicly identifies with Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection. We believe that infants of believing parents may be dedicated to the Lord but should not be baptized until they can personally articulate their faith and the purpose of baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death and an expression of our faith in His future coming that is to be continually practiced by all believers. We believe every Christian has a right to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper, but that participation must always be preceded by solemn self-examination.

#### Section 11: The End Times

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Church. This event, commonly called the rapture, will be followed by great tribulation on earth and will culminate in the visible and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth, commonly called the Second Coming, to rule the nations and establish His millennial kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20; Matthew 24:15-31; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-6).

#### Section 12: The Eternal State

We believe the souls of believers in Jesus Christ do, at death, immediately pass into His presence, and there remain with Him until the resurrection of our earthly bodies at His coming for the Church, when our souls and imperishable bodies shall be with Him forever in glory. We believe the souls of unbelievers remain after death in constant misery in Hades until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the millennium when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord (Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15).



# Governance

#### ARTICLE I: OUR MEMBERSHIP

### **Section 1: Membership**

While we acknowledge that all true believers in Jesus Christ are positionally members of the Church universal, membership in this local body requires participation in, and commitment to:

- the Beliefs and Governance of this church; intentional community with members of this local body; and
- the use of whatever gift(s) they have received to serve others, in order that they may do their part in faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms

As a result, we acknowledge two types of membership of Christ's Church:

- Positional Membership— which includes all true believers in Jesus Christ: and
- 2. **Participatory Membership** which includes true believers in Jesus Christ who have committed themselves to this local body as outlined above (hereinafter "members").

# Section 2: Qualifications for Participatory Membership

Individuals may present themselves for membership upon making a profession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each potential new member shall:
1) make a written and verbal statement of their faith in Christ and their intent, with God's help, to pursue a life that will bring glory to God; 2) assent to the Beliefs and Governance of Watermark Community Church; 3) attend the church's New Member Class;

and 4) become part of a community group; 5) choose and commit to an area of service; and 6) sign the Membership Covenant.

### Section 3: Participatory Membership Roles

A person is a member of this church only as long as they live within this community of faith and actively pursue the commitments outlined in the Membership Covenant. It is the elders' responsibility to "know well the condition of your flocks" (Proverbs 27:23), to encourage steadfastness of all individual members, and to advise members of the consequences of not abiding by their commitments as members, including eventual removal from membership.

# Section 4: Care and Correction of Participatory Members

It is the responsibility of the elders, as described in Acts 20:28, to "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." Shepherding includes care, encouragement, admonishment, and grace-filled correction of the members of our flock at Watermark. Although it is never our desire to separate an individual in the flock from Watermark membership, after pursuing restoration and reconciliation with the member, as set forth in Matthew 18, the elders may separate from a member of the flock at Watermark for:

- departure from their previously expressed agreement with "Our Core Beliefs";
- conduct that mars the testimony of the church or evidences a continued unrepentant departure from biblical morality;

- manifesting disinterest and/or inactivity in the life of the church:
- or other reasons as set forth in the Scriptures.

The separation process shall follow that laid out in Scripture. By applying for and accepting membership in this church, all members submit themselves to the care and correction of the elders and may not resign from membership in an attempt to avoid such care and correction.

# Section 5: Termination of Participatory Membership

Voluntary Member Termination: Members who move from the local area, change churches, or no longer meet the requirements for active membership may be removed from Watermark membership. The elders may reinstate voluntarily terminated members upon the fulfillment of any outstanding member requirements.

Involuntary Member Termination: As shepherds of the flock entrusted to us, the elders are grieved any time a member "isolates himself," "seeks his own desire," and "breaks out against all sound judgment" (Proverbs 18:1). After following the process laid out in Scripture and diligently pursuing the member with opportunities for encouragement, admonishment, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation, membership may be involuntarily terminated at Watermark at the discretion of the elders. In accordance with Matthew 18, the facts of and reasons for the involuntary termination of a member may be communicated with a former member's community group, ministry leaders, and other parties, at the sole discretion of the elders.

#### ARTICLE II: OUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

This church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is an autonomous body of believers voluntarily submitting themselves to a form of government that we believe is in accordance with the Scriptures. The official offices of this church, through which all of its powers are administered, are covered in subsequent sections of this document. These offices shall be occupied by men, or women where specifically permitted, who are raised up by the Holy Spirit, called by the personal conviction of God, and appointed by the elders. The responsibilities of these offices are also defined and described in subsequent sections of this document.

#### ARTICLE III: OUR OFFICERS

#### Section 1: General

We believe that holding office in the church is by:

- the calling of God by the Holy Spirit;
- the conviction of the will of God on the part of the candidate; and
- the approval of the elders.

The officers in this church shall be the elders and those to whom they delegate authority and designate as officers. Selection of new elders, deacons and the pastoral elder shall be by appointment of the elders. The pastoral elder shall appoint all pastoral and ministerial staff (other than the pastoral elder), and as there is wisdom in the counsel of many, consult with his fellow elders on major hires.



#### **Section 2: The Elders**

#### **Description of the Office**

Consistent with the exhortation of Scripture, Watermark is led by a team of elders/pastors, not one man who reports to a board. This team of elders/pastors governs, corrects, cares for (shepherds), and oversees the spiritual interests of this church. An elder must be a member of this church and lead a life that meets the qualifications of Scripture and embodies the core values of Watermark Community Church.

The elders shall be comprised of not less than three (3) nor more than ten (10) men. The number of elders must be limited by the number of qualified men that the Lord raises up and the ability of the elders to maintain intimate, deep, and growing relationships between its members. It is imperative that the elders model accountability, care, and every other aspect of authentic biblical community. Great care should be taken as to the effects of the number of elders so as to ensure relational trust and intimacy amongst them.

#### Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the elders include:

- providing spiritual leadership for the church;
- directing the affairs of the church;
- receiving and dismissing members;
- making provision for teaching during worship services;
- praying for and with the people and watching over their spiritual and physical needs;
- leading the church's outreach to a lost world;
- providing care and correction for members; and

 executing on behalf of the church, deeds, notes, deeds of trust, releases, copyrights, intellectual property, and any other instruments or contracts as may be necessary to comply with God's leading for the church as to real property belonging to, or being acquired, improved, or sold by the church.

#### **Calling Elders**

Elders are raised up by God to provide spiritual leadership for the church. They are called by the existing elders to serve in the office of elder for the benefit of the church.

A prospective elder will be examined as prescribed below to determine:

- his personal knowledge and comprehension of the Word of God, especially as it relates to his being sound in doctrine and his knowledge as to the qualifications for an elder;
- his personal philosophy concerning the purpose of the local church and his responsibility as a leader within the church;
- his agreement with the Beliefs and Governance of this church, in its entirety;
- his ability and willingness to serve and participate actively as an elder, to attend faithfully the services and programs of the church, and to support the various programs and activities of the church:
- his ability to teach and his desire to cultivate this ability for the Lord;
- his life of making disciples for Christ; and his history of being in biblical community including

accountable, caring, submissive, and enduring relationships with other believers.

The elder selection process shall generally follow the process described below.

#### **Elder Selection Process**

The selection of a new elder shall, at a minimum, follow the four (4) steps below:

- Candidate Identification—Any potential elder shall be identified by the elders as a man fitting the biblical qualifications of an elder of the church and shall be submitted to a period of prayerful consideration by the existing elders.
- 2. Notification of the Potential Elder—Following a season of prayer, the elders, upon initial confirmation of the potential elder, shall notify the potential elder that he is being considered to hold the office of elder at the church. The potential elder shall submit himself to a time of prayer concerning God's call upon his life and his possible service as an elder of the church.
- 3. Validation—Upon the confirmation by the potential elder of God's call on his life, the elders shall begin a validation process which, at a minimum, consists of: the potential elder's completion of a "Potential Elder Questionnaire" to determine whether he meets the qualifications of an elder as set forth above; a re-affirmation that the potential elder is in agreement with the Beliefs and Governance of the Church; and various interviews with third parties concerning the potential elder's character, life, and Christian witness.

 Confirmation—Upon satisfactory completion of the validation process, the potential elder shall be presented to the congregation for its comment on his character, qualifications, or any other issue which would affect his suitability to serve as an elder of the church.

#### Removal

No person can be removed as an elder except for just cause as determined by a unanimous vote of the elders (exclusive of the elder whose removal is being considered). Just cause includes, but is not limited to: an elder being under the care and correction referred to in Article I - Section 4 of this document; events that would disqualify him from being an elder based on the standards set forth in this section; or changes to his behavior, schedule, or stage of life that affect his ability to maintain biblical community with the other elder members. If any elder fails to maintain biblical community with the other elder members, he should be informed and asked to make immediate adjustments to his schedule or voluntarily resign his office. The elders will accept the written resignation of an elder whenever submitted.

#### Section 3: The Pastoral Elder

The pastoral elder is the vocational spiritual leader of the church and has oversight of the spiritual life of the church in conjunction with the elders. The pastoral elder should be fully prepared for his ministry as required by the elders. He should live a consistent Christian life, ruling his own house well and having a good testimony with non-Christians.



#### **Responsibilities of the Pastoral Elder**

The pastoral elder is accountable to the elders for the oversight of the Beliefs and Governance of the church. He is responsible for leading the staff and church body in carrying out the purpose and values of the church and overseeing the church's ministries.

#### **Calling the Pastoral Elder**

The elders shall call a pastoral elder. When the elders desire the church to have a new pastoral elder, they may appoint a search committee to assist in identifying qualified candidates or search for a qualified candidate on their own. Ultimate responsibility and authority for calling a pastoral elder rests with the elders. Since the pastoral elder will serve as an elder of the church, at a minimum, the elder selection process shall be followed.

#### Removing a Pastoral Elder

When the pastoral elder resigns or is removed by the elders, the elders may call a meeting to inform the congregation of the reasons for the removal or resignation, so far as is honoring to God, the pastoral elder, and the congregation. When the pastoral elder resigns, the elders shall accept his resignation. When the pastoral elder resigns or is removed from that office, the elders shall make provision for the interim fulfillment of the pastoral elder's responsibilities. In that event, an Interim Pastor may be appointed by the elders as a minister to carry on the pastoral duties while the church is without a pastoral elder.

# Section 4: Other Church Leadership

#### **Description of the Office**

The elders may appoint participatory members within the church to positions of leadership. Their

appointment may be to key areas of responsibility in the Operating and Ministry Committees of the church, provided that such appointments shall be made in accordance with the mandates of the Holy Scripture as relates to positional differences between men and women.

#### Qualifications

These positions of servant leadership shall be occupied by men or women of spiritual maturity, exemplary lives, good reputation, sound judgment, and who, in their God-ordained roles, serve their own houses well.

#### Ministerial Staff

The pastoral elder shall appoint all pastoral and ministerial staff (other than the pastoral elder) and, as there is wisdom in the counsel of many, consult with his fellow elders on major hires. The pastoral elder may appoint pastoral and ministerial staff as required to provide care, teaching, counseling, and administration to the congregation. The number and types of ministers required will vary from time to time, depending on church growth, financial resources available, and discerned need.

# ARTICLE IV: OUR WORKERS (ORDINATION & COMMISSIONING)

It is our confidence that God will raise up Spirit-filled and gifted men and women from among us who will be called to a life of proclaiming the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. Such men and women may be given a commission to lead God's people, as is appropriate in Scripture, and share in the privileges and responsibilities thereof. The elders shall determine the

process, requirements, timing, and forms leading to ordination. The elders may also commission members to serve as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ under its authority, while they are members in good standing at this church.

#### ARTICLE V: OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The elders may delegate to individuals, committees, or organizations the right to transact any of its business or to exercise any of its powers, but the exercise of such delegation shall be subject to the supervision and control of the elders.

# ■ ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS TO OUR BELIEFS AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Our Core Beliefs, Doctrinal Statement, and Leadership Structure may be amended by the unanimous approval of the elders. Copies of any amendment(s) must be made available to members not more than thirty days following such amendment(s).



# **Baptism Guide**

### What is baptism?

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). In obedience to Christ, baptism publicly proclaims that a person is united to Christ by faith in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4), and is a member of His body, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### Does baptism save?

No. Baptism does not impart God's grace or save anyone from their sins. Rather, it is an obedient response to being saved through faith, and it is a symbol of how the person has died to sin and been made alive in Christ (Romans 6:11).

## Why does God command baptism?

Baptism is a concrete way for believers to demonstrate their obedience to Jesus's command to profess faith in Him publicly (Matthew 10:32; 28:18-20). As a person is immersed in water, he or she is proclaiming: "I believe in Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection; I am trusting in Him alone for my salvation; and I belong to His body, the Church" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Acts 4:12). Baptism is also a proclamation and illustration of the gospel to non-believers, as well as an invitation for them to come to faith in Christ.

• Baptism is a visible symbol of our identification with Christ. We identify with Christ's death and burial when we go under the water. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, our coming out of the water symbolizes that we now walk in a "newness" of life (Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This does not mean we are now perfect; growing to become more

- like Christ is a process. But when we trust in Him for our salvation, we are no longer enslaved to sin, and we have the power through Christ to defeat what our flesh desires to do (Romans 6:5-11).
- Baptism is a public profession of belief in Christ.
   You are not saved by being baptized, but you are baptized to show that you have been saved.
   Salvation is a free gift paid for by Christ on the cross (1 Corinthians 1:17) and is not dependent on our own works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Baptism is an act of obedience for believers in Christ. Even though baptism does not save, the Bible still commands believers to be baptized (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism is more properly called an "ordinance." We participate in the ordinance of baptism because it was ordained and commanded ("ordered") by the Lord Jesus Christ as a symbolic demonstration of our faith in Him.
- Baptism visibly displays our identification with Christ's body, the Church. Baptism is not done in isolation; you can't baptize yourself. Believers are baptized into the body (1 Corinthians 12:13) by someone who is already a member of the body. Typically, people are baptized by a leader in the local church.

# When and how does Watermark baptize?

Every week, we have the opportunity for individuals who have been changed by a relationship with Christ to be baptized. Baptisms are offered after all services.

We baptize by immersion, which we believe best symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection, and is the way baptism was demonstrated by Jesus and the Apostles (Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38-39).

# What if I was baptized as a baby?

At Watermark, we believe baptism is for believers who have consciously decided to be baptized. We believe baptism is an outward sign of new life given to an individual who has trusted in Christ for salvation (Romans 6:1-14; Matthew 28:19-20).

If you have been baptized as an infant, we would strongly encourage you to be baptized as a believer.

# How does the local church participate in baptism?

Every week, as individuals are baptized at Watermark, our local church plays a role of welcoming them into the family of God. The local church affirms their testimony and seeks to encourage them as they walk with Christ.

## Ready to be baptized?

If you have trusted in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins and hope of eternal life and would like to "go public" with your faith in Christ, let your verbal testimony listener know. We will meet with you to help you determine whether baptism is a great next step for you.







