



MEMBERSHIP CLASS

www.valleychurchwv.com

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

VALLEY CHURCH

Membership Class Outline

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OVERVIEW

We are so glad that you have decided to begin the process of partnering with Valley Church as a covenant member. At Valley Church, we are members on mission and partners for a purpose. It is our desire to see every member become an active part of the body of Christ to Seek, Serve and Send disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the valley and around the world.

About This Material

This class is designed to introduce you to what partnership at Valley Church is all about. In it we cover a variety of topics designed to give you a solid foundation as a follower of Jesus in how he has called us to follow Him together as partners in ministry.

Take your time and read through all of it. After you finish, click the link to fill out the Online Membership Questionnaire. If you don't have internet access you can fill it out on paper and submit it to the church office.

In the questionnaire you will be asked to write out your testimony of faith, indicate your agreement to the church constitution and tell us where you are interested in serving.

After the questionnaire has been submitted and our elders have reviewed it, we will contact you to plan a Sunday to corporately affirm membership in the body. In the service we will introduce you to the congregation, affirm your faith in Jesus and pray a prayer of blessing over you.

If you have any questions as you read through this material don't hesitate to reach out to our office at office@valleychurchwv.com or any of our church staff.

We are excited about what God is going to do through your partnership with us at Valley Church.

ABOUT VALLEY CHURCH

Valley Church is situated in the Upper Ohio River Valley, a place that suffers from the highest rates in the nation for depression, drug addiction and domestic abuse. The valley is a dark place but in this place of darkness the light of Jesus shines brighter.

For over 67 years this church has lifted high the name of Jesus as the hope of the world and the hope our valley needs. We believe that just as Jesus walked through the valley of the shadow of death by dying on the cross for our sin, that His resurrection proves his power to bring hope and healing to people in this valley and around the world.

Our logo represents what Jesus wants to do in each of our lives. He wants to save us from the dark the valley of sin and bring us into a relationship with him and community with his church.

The way up is through Jesus

The way forward is in community

#ForTheValley

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The apostle Paul preached the gospel throughout the world, and this is what he wrote:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. 1
Corinthians 15:1–4

That's it—the gospel: Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He was raised again on the third day. That is the cornerstone, the foundation of our faith.

How can I be saved?

This simple, yet profound, question is the most important question that can be asked and deals with where we will spend eternity after our lives in this world are over. The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas responded,

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. Acts 16:31

Why do I need to be saved?

We are born with sin (Psalm 51:5), and we all personally choose to sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8). Sin is what separates us from a holy God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

Saved from what?

Because of our sin, we all deserve death (Romans 6:23). While the physical consequence of sin is physical death, that is not the only kind of death that results from sin. All sin is ultimately committed against an eternal and infinite God (Psalm 51:4). Because of that, the just penalty for our sin is also eternal and infinite. What we need to be saved from is eternal destruction in hell, the wrath of God and separation from Him (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:15).

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

How did God provide salvation?

Because the just penalty for sin is eternal death and separation from God, only God could pay the penalty, because only He is infinite and eternal. So God became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ to take upon himself the punishment we deserve and endure the just wrath of God for our sin.

*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***

*But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8***

Jesus' death on the cross was the perfect and complete payment for our sin (1 John 2:2). He took the consequences we deserved. He died, but he didn't stay dead. After three days he rose again conquering sin and death once and for all. Jesus' resurrection from the dead demonstrated that His death was indeed the perfectly sufficient sacrifice for sin.

What do I need to do?

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **Ephesians 2:8-9***

There is nothing you can do to earn salvation. God has already done all of the work. All you must do is repent of your sin and place your faith in the salvation God offers through Jesus.

Fully trust in Jesus alone as the payment for your sins. Believe in Him, and you will not perish (John 3:16). God is offering you salvation as a gift. All you have to do is accept it. Jesus is the way of salvation (John 14:6).

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:9***

*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. **Acts 16:31***

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Many people today understand the church as a building. This is not a biblical understanding of the church. The word “church” is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.” The root meaning of church is not that of a building, but of a people.

Romans 16:5 says, “Greet the church that is in their house.” Paul refers to the church in their house—not a church building, but a body of believers.

The church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head. Ephesians 1:22–23 says, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” The body of Christ is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until Christ’s return.

Biblically, we may regard the church in two ways, as the universal church or as the local church.

The universal church consists of everyone, everywhere, who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). This verse says that anyone who believes is part of the body of Christ and has received the Spirit of Christ as evidence. All those who have received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ comprise the universal church.

The local church is described in Galatians 1:1–2: “Paul, an apostle . . . and all the brothers with me, to the churches in Galatia.” Here we see that in the province of Galatia there were many churches—they had a localized ministry and were scattered throughout the province. They were local churches. Local churches are gatherings of people who claim the name of Christ. The local church is where believers can fully apply the “body” principles of 1 Corinthians chapter 12—encouraging, teaching, and building one another up in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In summary, the church is not a building or a denomination. According to the Bible, the church is the body of Christ—all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and members of the universal church should seek fellowship and edification in a local church.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH?

The Church is a body, not a business. It is an organism, not an organization.

The Bible teaches clearly that there are five purposes for the church. These five purposes are modeled in Acts 2, prayed for by Jesus in John 17, explained by Paul in Ephesians 4 and shown all through the New Testament. But they are best expressed in the five verbs in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These are: Worship, Ministry, Evangelism, Fellowship, and Discipleship.

A great commitment to the great commandment and the great commission is the core of what it means to be a healthy body.

Worship

And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. Matthew 22:37-38

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

This passage contains all the elements of true worship. First, there is the motivation to worship: “the mercies of God.” The knowledge and understanding of these incredible gifts motivate us to pour forth praise and thanksgiving—in other words, worship!

Also in the passage is a description of the manner of our worship: “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.” Presenting our bodies means giving to God all of ourselves. The reference to our bodies here means all our human faculties, all of our humanness—our hearts, minds, hands, thoughts, attitudes—are to be presented to God.

But how? Again, the passage is clear: “by the renewing of your mind.” We renew our minds daily by cleansing them of the world’s “wisdom” and replacing it with true wisdom that comes from God.

There is only one way to renew our minds, and that is by the Word of God. To know the truth, to believe the truth, to hold convictions about the truth, and to love the truth will naturally result in true spiritual worship.

True worship is God-centered worship. People tend to get caught up in where they should worship, what music they should sing in worship, and how their worship looks to other people. Focusing on these things misses the point. Jesus tells us that true worshipers will worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This means we worship from the heart and the way God has designed. Worship can include praying, reading God's Word with an open heart, singing, participating in communion, and serving others. It is not limited to one act, but is done properly when the heart and attitude of the person are in the right place.

True worship is not confined to what we do in church or open praise (although these things are both good, and we are told in the Bible to do them). True worship is the acknowledgment of God and all His power and glory in everything we do. The highest form of praise and worship is obedience to Him and His Word. To do this, we must know God; we cannot be ignorant of Him (Acts 17:23). Worship is to glorify and exalt God—to show our loyalty and admiration to our Father.

Ministry

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 22:39-40

And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27

"Ministry" is from the Greek word diakoneo, meaning "to serve" or douleuo, meaning "to serve as a slave." In the New Testament, ministry is seen as service to God and to other people in His name. Jesus provided the pattern for Christian ministry—He came, not to receive service, but to give it (see Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 13:1-17).

The Christian should minister by meeting people's needs with love and humility on Christ's behalf (see Matthew 20:26; Mark 10:43; John 2:5,9; Acts 6:3; Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 4:12). Christians are to minister to others out of their devotion to Christ and their love for others. Ministry to others should be impartial and unconditional, always seeking to help others as Jesus would.

From the early New Testament churches to the churches of our day, each Christian should be in the ministry of helping others (see Romans 12:3-8, 10-13; 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

The content of ministry seems to prioritize the ministry in spiritual things, not just practical things. Ministry should certainly place emphasis on sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others so they can come to know Him and receive Him as personal Savior, go on to experience Him as Lord of their life, and go

even further to know Christ as the essence of their Life (see John 1:12; Colossians 2:6-7; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:8-10). Ministry can, and should, include ministering to the physical, emotional, mental, vocational, and financial needs of others. Jesus did, and so should we!

Evangelism

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28-18-19a

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" Romans 10:15-16

Personal evangelism is the act of a person sharing the gospel with another. We can learn a lot about personal evangelism from those first Christians. The following are some factors that contribute to effective personal evangelism:

1. Prayer.

Beautiful words and impassioned speeches may move a soul, but they cannot transform a hard heart. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can bring conviction and repentance (2 Timothy 2:25). The first Christians relied on massive amounts of prayer before they attempted to do anything for the Lord, and God blessed their efforts (Acts 1:14; 4:31; 6:6; 13:3; Colossians 4:4). When our prayer lives are consistent and meaningful, we are ready to engage in personal evangelism.

2. Biblical Knowledge.

We don't have to possess a seminary degree or the ability to read ancient Greek, but we do need an overall understanding of what the Bible says. Many people allow this factor to silence them, citing their lack of biblical knowledge as a reason they don't witness for Christ. But there is no reason that we cannot study and learn for ourselves what God says about His plan of salvation. Christians should be experts on the gospel. Second Timothy 2:15 commands us to study as unto God so that we will become "as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." We need to know the basic truths of Scripture in order to have effective personal evangelism.

3. A Story.

We all have a story. If we've come to know Christ and have experienced forgiveness of sin and His transforming power in our lives, then we have a story to tell. Effective personal evangelism often incorporates a personal testimony. Paul often recounted his own conversion story in his evangelism, reminding his audience of how wicked he had been and how far God's grace had brought him (Philippians

3:4–6; Acts 26:9–23; 1 Corinthians 15:9). An example of how a story affects personal evangelism is found in John 9. Jesus healed a man born blind. The Pharisees pressured the healed man with questions about Jesus that he could not answer. Finally, in frustration, the man cried out, “One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (verse 25). We may not know the answers to every question we are asked, but we do know what Jesus has done for us. We know that once we were blind to spiritual truths, and now we see.

4. The Right Attitude.

Much damage has been done in the name of Christ by people trying to conduct personal evangelism without love and without humility. First Corinthians 13:1–3 reminds us that we may do any number of noble-looking deeds, but if we don’t do them in love, we have accomplished nothing. Love for Christ must be first (Mark 12:30), followed closely by a love for people. Our motivation in personal evangelism must never be anger, a desire to condemn someone, or a need to win an argument. We should check our own hearts before embarking on a quest to evangelize others (Matthew 7:3–5). We don’t have to be perfect, but we need to be certain that our desire is the salvation of the lost, not the motivation to look spiritual or to be right. Galatians 5:22–23 is a list of character qualities that will be a part of effective personal evangelism.

5. Obedience, Not Results.

It is often tempting to scale down biblical truth in personal evangelism in order to elicit the response we desire. But to do so only undermines the work God wants to do in that person’s life. Scripture is replete with examples of people obeying God’s commands, even though the results were nothing like they assumed: Abraham followed God to Canaan—and a famine hit right away (Genesis 12:10). Mary accepted the role of mother to the promised Messiah—then watched Him be mocked and crucified (Luke 1:38; John 19:25). Paul followed the Holy Spirit’s leading to Philippi—and was arrested and imprisoned (Acts 16:6–24).

In our personal evangelism, it is good to remember that we are only responsible to God for our obedience, not the results of that obedience. We may present the gospel thoroughly and lovingly, and the person to whom we witness may hear and understand but choose to walk away. We are not responsible for that reaction, only the level of obedience involved in our presentation. Jesus explained in Luke 8:5–15 that human hearts are like types of soil. The seed sown is the same in each case, but people receive the Word of God differently and respond differently. Our job, as the sowers of seeds, is to present truth as effectively as we know how and entrust the results to God.

Personal evangelism is the responsibility of every believer. God calls each of us to different tasks and endows us with different gifts, but the goal is the same—the salvation of the lost (1 Corinthians 12:6–7; Luke 19:10). He places us in strategic positions for influence, not privilege. We have neighbors, coworkers, friends, and relatives who need to hear the good news about Jesus. Whether we’re called to lead evangelistic crusades or simply cultivate a relationship with an unsaved neighbor, personal evangelism should be the driving force in our lives. Jesus’ words spoken to His disciples more than two thousand years

ago still apply to His followers today: “As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). As long as we have breath, we can do personal evangelism. As long as we stay surrendered to the Holy Spirit, He will do it through us (Luke 12:12).

4. Fellowship

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19b

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:1-4

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47

In order to understand the importance of Christian fellowship, we must first understand what Christian fellowship is and what it isn't. The Greek words translated “fellowship” in the New Testament mean essentially a partnership to the mutual benefit of those involved. Christian fellowship, then, is the mutually beneficial relationship between Christians, who can't have the identical relationship with those outside the faith.

The mystery and privilege that is Christian fellowship is that it exists because God has enabled it by His grace. Those who believe the gospel are united in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, and that unity is the basis of fellowship. This relationship is described by Jesus in His high-priestly prayer for His followers: “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). The “complete unity” He refers to is the oneness that Christians experience in true fellowship, oneness with one another, with Christ and with the Father. Just as the Father is in Jesus, so is Jesus in us, and we have unity with one another because of the uniqueness of that relationship (1 John 1:3).

This relationship must be the basis of Christian fellowship. We can have friendships and relationships with unbelievers, but true Christian fellowship can only occur within the body of Christ. We are united to one another by common beliefs, purposes, and goals. Our hearts and minds are “other-worldly” because we follow Jesus Christ, who said that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). We know that we are strangers in this world, and we long for the time when we will be in our true home, heaven.

The importance of true Christian fellowship is that it reinforces these things in our mind and helps us to focus on Christ and His desires and goals for us. As iron sharpens iron, in true Christian fellowship Christians sharpen one another's faith and stir one another to exercise that faith in love and good works, all to God's glory.

5. Discipleship

Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
Matthew 28:20

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. **Philippians 4:8-9**

By definition, a disciple is a follower, one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in our hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. This process requires believers to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily—studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. In addition, we should always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and to disciple others to walk in His way. According to Scripture, being a Christian disciple involves personal growth characterized by the following:

1. Putting Jesus first in all things (Mark 8:34-38).

The disciple of Christ needs to be set apart from the world. Our focus should be on our Lord and pleasing Him in every area of our lives. We must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.

2. Following Jesus' teachings (John 8:31-32).

We must be obedient children and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God (1 Samuel 28:18), and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as He lived a life on earth of complete obedience to the Father even to the point of death (Philippians 2:6-8).

3. Fruitfulness (John 15:5-8).

Our job is not producing fruit. Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this will be new conduct (thoughts, words and actions) representative of that change. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something we can conjure up on our own.

4. Love for other disciples (John 13:34-35).

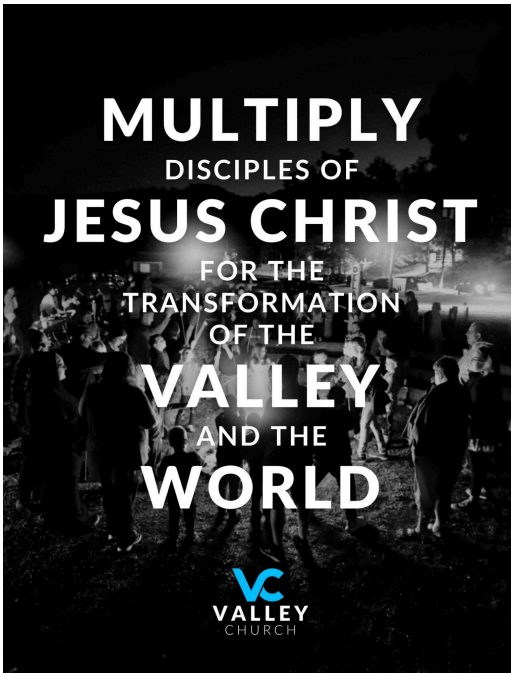
We are told that love of other believers is the evidence of our being a member of God's family (1 John 3:10). Love is defined and elaborated on in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. These verses show us that love is not an emotion; it is action. We must be doing something and involved in the process. Furthermore, we are told to think more highly of others than of ourselves and to look out for their interests (Philippians 2:3-4). The next verse in Philippians (verse 5) really sums up what we are to do when it comes to everything in life: "our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." What a perfect example He is to us for everything we are to do in our Christian walk.

5. Evangelism - Making disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20).

We are to share our faith and tell nonbelievers about the wonderful changes Jesus Christ has made in our lives. No matter what our maturity level in the Christian life, we have something to offer. Too often, we believe the lie from Satan that we don't really know enough or haven't been a Christian long enough to make a difference. Not true! Some of the most enthusiastic representatives of the Christian life are new believers who have just discovered the awesome love of God. They may not know a lot of Bible verses or the "accepted" way of saying things, but they have experienced the love of the living God, and that is exactly what we are to share.

WHY DOES VALLEY CHURCH EXIST?

(OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES)



OUR MISSION

As a church, our mission is to glorify God by fulfilling the parting command of Jesus when he said: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* **Matthew 28:19-20**

Our obedience to this command is the foundation of every ministry we do at Valley Church.



OUR VISION

We are called to follow Jesus together as partners today and into the future.

- We **SEEK** and save the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Luke 19:10)
- We **SERVE** as disciples of Christ in obedience to everything Jesus commanded. (Matthew 20:28)
- We **SEND** followers of Jesus to go out into the world and do the same through the work of evangelism, disciple making and church planting.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

We have four distinct but complementary statements summarizing our beliefs to varying degrees of comprehensiveness. As a member we expect that you will agree and uphold these beliefs by acting and teaching in alignment with them.

Statement of Basic Beliefs: This statement represents the most simple and foundational beliefs of Christian orthodoxy from a biblical and historical perspective. It captures the basic contours of Christian theology.

Statement of Biblical Doctrine: This statement represents a full summary of the various convictions articulated in the other statements. Together, these statements communicate what we believe as a church and will therefore be foundational for our teaching, preaching, praying, instructing, disciplining and counseling.

Church Covenant: This is a series of written pledges based on the Bible which church members voluntarily make to God and to one another regarding their basic moral and spiritual commitments and the practice of their faith. As members, we use this statement to exhort one another to live holy lives, and we challenge brothers and sisters persisting in sin.

Matters Pertaining to Biblical Ethics: This statement captures our convictions on areas that are debated even among “Bible-believing” churches. As the line between right and wrong is blurred in society it is important that as a church we stand on the sure foundation of the Word of God as our authority in every area of life as we are called to “teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness”

Statement of Basic Beliefs

The gospel is the hope of the world. As we read the Scriptures, we see the overarching themes of God's providence, power and provision to reconcile mankind and the created world to Himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In light of this, we aim to be explicitly gospel-centered in all that we preach, teach and practice.

We Believe:

- The Scriptures are true, inspired by God, authoritative and sufficient.
- There is only one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- All things exist for the glory of God.
- All mankind—Christ excluded—is sinful by both birth and action.
- The penalty for sin is physical and spiritual separation from God at death.
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin and is both fully God and fully man.
- Jesus Christ died as the sacrificial substitute to pay the penalty for sin.
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and will one day return.
- There will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Only those who turn from sin and to Jesus in faith and repentance will be raised to eternal reward. Those who do not turn from sin and to Jesus will be raised to eternal punishment.
- Only through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin can one be reconciled to God and experience true hope, life and joy for all eternity with Him.

Read through the rest of what we believe in the “Statement of Faith” section of the Church Constitution.

HOW IS THE CHURCH ORGANIZED?

(THE CHURCH CONSTITUTION)

At its essence, a constitution is simply a definition of the church's structures of authority. Most fundamentally, it defines who can do what and under what circumstances. So, for example, it defines who holds positions of leadership, how a budget is adopted, processes for hiring a pastor, expectations of members and dozens of other things.

By its very nature, the church of Jesus Christ often needs to do things as a corporate body. The constitution ensures that things are done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Jesus' parting command as he ascended into heaven was in the form of a command to "go therefore and make disciples" (Matthew 28). As a church that is our mission, the "what". The church constitution defines "how" and "by whom" those things get done as we anticipate His return.

Read through the church constitution on our web site so as a member you can be informed about how we are structured.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PARTNER WITH VALLEY CHURCH?

Partnership, which is also referred to as church membership, is a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian. Some people are quick to dismiss church membership because they think it means making people jump through hoops or being part of a club. Or they think it means erecting standards of behavior for the sake of entry. All of these things sound like the opposite of God's grace, which is free. So why, in our modern day and age, would we encourage church partnership? Here are three reasons why we believe that becoming partners with each other is a great thing.

1. It's Biblical

Even though there is no verse that explicitly says, "You must become a member of a church," it is implied all throughout the New Testament. In fact, there are 59 "one another" commands in the New Testament! Just a few of the "one anothers" that followers of Jesus are called to are: "accept one another (Rom. 15:7)," "care for one another" (Gal. 6:2), "commit to one another" (1 Jn. 3:16), and "be accountable to one another" (Eph. 5:21). These commands only make sense in the context of an identified group of "one anothers," which is a specific local church.

2. It's Practical

Christian leaders have been called to lovingly care for and serve specific people. The writer of Hebrews says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account..." (Hebrews 13:17). There's a lot of mutual weight and responsibility in that idea, but it naturally raises the question, "are church leaders responsible for everyone in their midst?" Elsewhere, Peter told leaders, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care" (1 Peter 5:2). Like a shepherd cares for their specific sheep, so should a leader care for their specific people. Partnership, then, becomes one of the most practical ways that these specific people are identified and cared for in ways that go beyond general Christian charity.

3. It's Beneficial

Individualist Christianity is a myth. Lone-Range Christianity is a dangerous pursuit. As followers of Jesus, not only have we been saved into a new life, but we've been placed into a larger family. And this larger family brings with it benefits that going at it alone never could. For instance, being part of a specific church family ensures that you have a group of people who are publicly committed to loving you, serving you, and watching over you. You will grow in your relationship with Jesus because you have a community committed to encouraging you, building you up, strengthening you, praying for you, and holding you accountable (Heb. 10:24). In other words, you now have a tangible, spiritual family that has your back and is committed to seeing you "Practice the Way of Jesus Together."

Why do we refer to members as partners?

Titles are important, not only because of the meaning they carry, but also because of what we experientially associate with them. In our cultural context, the term membership can imply that the church is something you can join in order to get special privileges others don't have or you merely "join" a church in the same way you join a local health club, golf course, community organization, or hotel loyalty program. Membership in those settings involves paying a set of dues to an organization in exchange for a service. You have certain privileges as a member, and your relationship with that organization is consumer in nature.

There is nothing wrong with your gym, golf club, local civic organization, or loyalty program membership being consumer based. A local church however isn't something you just "join," it is something you both partner with in mission and submit yourself to. It is much more like joining a team than it is joining your local YMCA. Therefore, we feel that the term "partner" best describes what it means to be intentionally committed to a local church. Partnership is less about special privileges and more about intentional accountability and oversight in your discipleship to Jesus.

The New Testament pattern is that every Christian should be committed to a specific local church and under the spiritual care of appointed leadership. It is through the local church that God desires the Christian life to be lived out. Church partnership is for believers only. Because of that it is important that each local church has a process for identifying the specific people they are called to care for and exercise oversight over (Heb. 13:17). It is equally important for the church partners to know the specific people they are partnering with on mission (Heb. 10:24) and the local leadership they are choosing to come under.

Who can become a partner at Valley Church?

Persons confessing faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives, being baptized by immersion and agreeing to the Constitution, may apply for partnership.

Partnership Commitments

At Valley Church we want to help you grow in your discipleship to Jesus. These commitments are the essentials for how we want to help you grow in your spiritual journey and be a church that is united together on mission. This is not designed to be a checklist, rather these are six areas of mutual commitment:

1. Active participation in the life of the church: Because we don't want you to go at it alone, and because we are all prone to stumble, we believe that active participation in the life of the church is crucial. This includes consistent Sunday worship and participation in a smaller, intentional discipleship relationship group that is committed to personal spiritual growth, growth as a community, and growth in mission. (Heb. 10:24; Rom 12).

2. Serving the local church with your gifts: Because God has gifted you and wants you to be a participant in his mission, we want to help you use your spiritual gifts and talents for mutual edification and community outreach (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Eph. 4:11-16). Every partner should be able to identify where they are serving.

3. Generosity: A generous life is the best type of life and reflects the grace of God. A lifestyle of generosity that includes systematic giving to the financial needs of the church as an act of worship is an important part of following Jesus and partnering with a local church (1 Cor. 9:1-18; 2 Cor. 9:6-12).

4. Personal Spiritual Growth: It is important that our doing FOR God does not outpace our being WITH God. Knowing Jesus is the very best thing there is and we want to help you grow in that (Psalm 1).

5. Missional Focus: It is important that partners view themselves as missionaries and their spheres of influence as a mission field.

6. Promoting Unity: Our love for each other and our unity is one of the most powerful witnesses to the outside world. Because of this we will commit to promoting unity in the body by communicating in truth and love, and settling all differences with one another in humility and in accordance with the Scriptures. (Rom. 12:5; John 17:21; Gal. 6:1-2).

WHERE CAN I SERVE?

(UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS)

We don't want members just for the sake of having or to inflate our membership numbers. It is our vision to see every member become an active and vital part of this ministry. After becoming a member of the church, we want you to start serving somewhere.

It would be easy for you to say yes to anything that you are asked to do in the church, but we have observed that that doesn't lead to health in our local body. Instead we want you to understand where you are uniquely gifted and commit to serving faithfully in just one or two areas.

We find this model for service in 1 Corinthians 12 where it says...

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12***

It then goes on to talk about how each member of the body plays a vital role saying:

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. **1 Corinthians 12:14-27***

See, each member of the body is important. When you serve in the church you have not been called to just perform a task. You are recognizing that you have been uniquely gifted as a member of the body to accomplish the mission Christ gave us to "make disciples".

How can I discover my spiritual gifts?

God gives spiritual gifts to believers for the purpose of ministry within the church. The English word comes from two Greek words, *charismata* and *pneumatika*. The root of *charismata* is *charis*, which means “grace” and speaks of something undeserved or unearned. The second word, *pneumatika*, means “spirituals,” or the things given by the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit desires to continually fill each believer with power to bear witness to the gospel and imparts His gifts for the edification of the body and the work of ministry in the world. Spiritual gifts are referred to in Scripture in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and 1 Corinthians 12:28b. The healthy exercising of these diverse gifts within a unified body is essential to the mission of the Church in the world today.

Here is a list of gifts that we see were given by the Spirit of God for the edification of the body and the building of his church.

- 1. Prophecy:** To prophesy is to preach or to tell forth or declare the Scripture. Prophecy does not necessarily mean to foretell the future.
- 2. Teaching:** This gift is the ability to teach the Word of God and help the hearers to understand the Scriptures as the Author intended.
- 3. Faith:** This gift is a consistent, enabling faith that truly believes God in the face of overwhelming obstacles and human impossibilities, and for great things. John MacArthur calls this the "gift of prayer" because the gift is primarily expressed toward God through prayer.
- 4. Wisdom:** This is the ability to apply wisdom, gained from spiritual insight, to believers; knowing what is right and what is wrong, applied knowledge.
- 5. Knowledge:** This is an understanding of the facts of Scripture. From the human perspective, it is scholarship or the ability to know the truths of Scripture both broadly and deeply.
- 6. Discernment:** The ability to tell which things are from the Spirit and which are not, distinguishing truth from error. This gift serves as protection for the church.
- 7. Mercy:** This is the ability to show deep compassion to those who have spiritual, physical, or emotional needs.

8. Exhortation: Exhortation is the ability to encourage and motivate. A person with this gift can come alongside another to comfort him with love, to encourage him to a deeper spiritual commitment and growth, or to exhort him to action. This is the gift that qualifies people to exercise a counseling ministry in the body.

9. Giving: This gift is a direct reference to the material ministry of giving food, clothes, money, houses, etc., in response to the needs of the church.

10. Administration/Leadership: This gift is the ability to oversee the flock. This gift should be exhibited by pastors and elders, as well as leaders of missionary societies, youth ministries, evangelistic associations, etc.

11. Helps: This gift is the ability to aid in a time of need or bear one another's burdens as the situation arises.

12. Service: The gift of service is working for the body of Christ in areas of physical ministry, such as serving food or performing maintenance.

13. Miracles: This gift is the ability to do "wonders" and "signs." Christ performed many miracles, as recorded in Scripture. Paul used this gift to affirm his apostleship, as described in 2 Corinthians 12:12.

14. Healing: Peter had this gift (see Acts 3:6-8; 5:15-16), which affirmed his message and helped to establish the foundation for the church.

15. Tongues and interpretation of tongues: This gift is manifested by the speaking of a language unknown to the speaker (see Acts 2:1-11). This gift had to be accompanied by the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).

The Bible does not explicitly explain how to determine one's spiritual giftedness. However, you can begin by looking for open doors, praying for opportunities to serve and seeking the counsel of other believers that have discernment and know you well.

*10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,
as good stewards of God's varied grace:*

1 Peter 4:10

ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready to partner with Valley Church on mission? If so, take some time to fill out the Online Membership Questionnaire. If you don't have internet access you can fill it out on paper and submit it to the church office.

In the questionnaire you will be asked to write out your testimony of faith, indicate your agreement to the church constitution and tell us where you are interested in serving.

After the questionnaire has been submitted and our elders have reviewed it, we will contact you to plan a Sunday to corporately affirm membership in the body. In the service we will introduce you to the congregation, affirm your faith in Jesus and pray a prayer of blessing over you.

We are excited about what God is going to do through your partnership with us at Valley Church.

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Membership Class. Below are a few questions to follow through on in order to bring you into Membership. Once you submit the questionnaire one of our Elders will be in contact with you to get to know you, talk about what Jesus has done in your life and schedule a time to bring you into membership at the church.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Birthdate: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

I have read through the Membership Material.

- Yes
- No
- I have questions about:

I have read and agree with the Church Constitution and Statement of Faith.

- Yes
- No
- I have questions about:

I have been baptized as a believer by immersion.

- Yes
- No
- I have questions about:

Are you currently a member of another Church?

- Yes, i am a member of (Church Name & Address)

- No, i am not a member of another church

My Testimony of Faith

#1. Explain The Message of the Gospel Using Only Scripture

Take some time to share with us scripture that has helped you to understand the message of the Gospel and what Jesus has done for you.

#2. How Did You Come To Follow Jesus?

Take a moment to review the following passages and how you respond personally to Jesus: the fact of sin (Romans 3:23); the penalty of sin (Romans 6:23); Jesus' payment for sin (Romans 5:8); the requirement to repent and trust Jesus personally (Romans 10:9-10) and Jesus' two invitations "Come to Me, Come Follow Me"? (Matthew 11:28-30 and Matthew 16:24-26).

#3. How Has Following Jesus Changed Your Life?

#4. Tell About A Time When You Experienced The Grace of God.

What was the situation? How did experiencing the grace of God make you feel? How did that shape your relationship with God?

#5. Share Your Favorite Scripture.

If you have a favorite scripture passage that has meant a lot to you, share it here.

#6. What Are Your Spiritual Gifts?

God gives spiritual gifts to believers for the purpose of ministry within the church. The english word comes from two Greek words, charismata and pneumatika. The root of charismata is charis, which means “grace” and speaks of something undeserved or unearned. The second word, pneumatika, means “spirituals,” or the things given by the Spirit of God.

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- Teaching
- Faith

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Discernment
- Mercy
- Exhortation
- Giving
- Administration/Leadership
- Helps
- Service
- Miracles
- Healing
- Tongues and interpretation of tongues

#7. What Areas Of Ministry Are You Interested In?

- Kids
- Youth
- College/Young Adults
- Mens
- Womens
- Music (Vocals/Instrumentalists)
- Media (Audio/Visual/Lighting & Digital Media)
- Care (Visitation & Meals)
- Security
- Hospitality/First Impressions (Greeters & Special Events)
- Facilities (Maintenance & Renovation)
- Other

Thank you for completing the membership questionnaire.

You can submit this to the church office. Once submitted one of our Elder team will be in contact with you to get to know you, talk about what Jesus has done in your life and schedule a time to bring you into membership at the church.