

Membership in this Community

Introduction to the Community Commitment

The value of community that God has designed for people who accept Jesus as their leader and Forgiver is immeasurable. It's really not possible to put every aspect of doing life together into words or pictures, because the experience is so personal and unique.

We believe there is considerable worth in quantifying what we can, so that we have a common frame of reference for doing life together as the church. That's what our membership, or community commitment process is designed to do. Your specific experience may not be exactly like someone else's, but we believe we can characterize some similarities in our journeys and aid others in their quest for life-changing relationship with God and His church.

We encourage everyone to take some time in study and reflection about the church. This deepens our appreciation for God's church and the part we each play in it.

After participating in Starting Point Café' Orientation, a person may be ready to become a member of Journey's Crossing—committed to this community as God has planned for all of us to be part of His church and specifically of a local congregation. The Community Commitment may be filled in and then discussed with a trained leader. Indicate on your Crossing Card that you are ready and someone will contact you for an appointment. If you have questions that you would like to discuss with a staff member, please don't hesitate to call the office (301.963.9250) or contact one of us directly.

What Membership Means

The difference between "attenders" and "members" can be summed up in the word commitment. In fact, at Journey's Crossing, we call our membership covenant a "Community Commitment." We ask you to commit to this community for four reasons:

- **A BIBLICAL Reason:** Christ is committed to the Church. *"...Christ loved the church, and He gave His life for it."* Ephesians 5:25
- **A CULTURAL Reason:** It is an antidote to our society. We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything...a job...a marriage...a country. This attitude has even produced a generation of "church shoppers and hoppers." Membership, a commitment to this faith community, swims against the current of America's "consumer religion." It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.
- **A PRACTICAL Reason:** It defines who can be counted on. Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration.
- **A PERSONAL Reason:** It fosters spiritual growth. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you're not committed to any specific church family.

Typical Three Step Process

1. Investigation

Sunday Celebration Service
Starting Point Café'
Seeker Small Group or Other Group Connection

2. Decision

Study the community principles from the Book of Acts (attached).
Review "What We Believe" material (attached).
Prayerfully consider membership covenant points (see Community Commitment).
If not done previously, be immersed (baptized) into Christ, following the biblical pattern.
Fill in "Community Commitment" sheet.

3. Confirmation

Meet with a group or team leader to discuss membership covenant. Agree to membership covenant.

What We Believe

About God

God is an uncreated spirit who is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has always existed in three personalities: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God. *Genesis 1:1,26,27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 11 Corinthians 13:14*

About Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all men by dying on a cross. He became alive again after being dead three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He's the Head of the church and the only way to God and eternal life. He went to heaven and now "sits at the right hand of God" and will return to earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. *Matthew 1:22,23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5, 14:6-30; Hebrews 4:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 1:3,4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14, 15; Titus 2:13*

About the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian seeks to live under His control daily. *11 Corinthians 3: 17; John 16:7-13, 14: 16, 17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:1*

About Communication From God

The Bible is God's message to all people. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. The original documents did not contain any errors. God has provided an avalanche of evidence to support what he claims in the Bible. We believe God also communicates through the Holy Spirit, prayer, circumstances and His church, but these will never conflict with the truth he's already communicated in the Bible. *11 Timothy 3:16; 11 Peter 1:20, 21; 11 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 119:105,160, 12:6; Proverbs 30:5*

About being Human

Humans are made in the spiritual image of God, and share many god-like qualities. Mankind is the supreme object of God's creation. Although man has tremendous potential for good, he is marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called sin. This attitude separates man from God. Man can only reach his highest potential by being reconciled to God. *Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2*

About Salvation

Salvation is being right with God. It means having your sins forgiven rather than punished. It means that God's Spirit lives within you and helps you become a real person. It means you will enjoy living with God forever in heaven after you die. Salvation is God's free gift to everyone who puts his or her faith in Jesus. *Matthew 5:3-11; Romans 5:1; 6:23; Titus 3:5; John 14:1-2*

About Becoming a Christian

Man can never make up for his sin by self-improvement or doing good deeds. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can man be saved from sin's penalty which is death. The Bible says we are saved by grace through faith. Therefore to become a follower of Christ, one needs to admit to God that he is a sinner in need of God's grace and forgiveness. He needs to pledge in faith that he wants to stop sinning and start living like Christ. Through faith he must accept that Jesus paid the penalty for his sin by dying on the cross and that he is being saved because Jesus came back from the dead. In the Bible, every time a person accepted Christ, they were baptized (which means to submerge under water) as soon as possible. Since the Bible is our guide manual, we follow the same practice. *Acts 2:38; 8:34f; 22:16; Romans 5:1-2; 6:1-7; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Colossians 2:12; John 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26-27*

About Living as a Christian

The Christian life is the best way to live. God desires for people to live the highest quality life possible. Once one becomes a Christian, it's like getting married to Jesus. We fall in love with Him and want to do the things that please Him. We begin a long process of getting rid of sin and becoming more like Jesus. However, the only way possible to live this way is through God's power within us. So we seek to practice a daily dependence on God's Spirit to enable us to do what is right. *Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 5:1-18*

About the Church

The Church is a divinely instituted body, given the mission of strategically and effectively pursuing God's purpose on earth. Each local church is God's primary means of bringing His people to spiritual maturity and equipping them for the work of ministry. The church is a gathering place for love, support, encouragement, accountability, service, worship, growth, and mission with people who share a common bond in Christ. Together, we will strive to become the kind of church described in the Bible, where there's relevant teaching, heart-felt worship, honest friendships, constant prayer and compassionate care for those in need. *Acts 2:42-47; Matthew 16:18; 22:34-40; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:42-47; Ephesians 4:11-16*

About the Christian Mission

Jesus is the light of the world. Christians cannot keep the light to themselves. They are commanded to let the light shine to everyone. It is the responsibility of every Christian to share the Good News with those God brings us into contact with. We practice sharing about Christ and inviting friends to church. *Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:15; John 15:5*

About Temporary Things and Eternal Things

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence. *John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:15*

Community in the early church

“Our vision is to be a community which impacts our culture as the early church affected their world.”

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

Everyone in the community of faith has full benefit of the Holy Spirit and is celebrated for all the potential He creates in us.

We are witnesses for Jesus, on mission to spread His love in our neighborhoods, in the Washington metro area, in the Northeast, and around the globe. (See also 4:2; 4:12; 4:20; 4:33; 5:29-32; 5:42; 7:2-53;)

Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Corporately united in prayer, our community is based on our mutual dependence on God as the Answer and the One who Answers. (See also 2:42; 4:42-30;)

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Entrance into the Christian community involves a change of heart and publicly appropriating the work of Jesus. (See also 3:19; 3:26;)

Each person who has received their new identity has also been given the gift of God's Holy Spirit (see above).

Participation in the community is open to everyone, all ages, all races, all backgrounds, all generations.

Acts 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

This community is open to dramatic expansion and dreams of thousands coming to a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. (See also 2:47; 5:14; 6:7;)

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Teaching the word of God, and allowing that teaching to change us, is our heartbeat as a community.

Remembering always that the saving work of Jesus is our hope and glory, we celebrate communion gladly and every weekend as we gather for worship.

Everything we have is part of God's gift, and we are willing to share all we have to do all we can to meet needs in the best way we can determine. (See also 4:32-36;)

We will do life together daily, as well as in large special events at least weekly.

The community of Christ will be an attractive and accepting group that expects God to draw many more to Himself through our community. (See also 5:13; 6:7;

Acts 3:16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

All the credit for life-change goes to Jesus Christ in this community. (See also 4:10-11)

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

We are real people, genuinely ordinary, who believe that Jesus can be seen through us if we allow his Spirit to encourage us.

Acts 5:38-39 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

Lives are still changed by God—this is the sustaining life-blood of the church, Christ's community.

Acts 6:3-4 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

Based on gifts given by the Spirit of God, each person in this community will find her/his place of service and source of care.

As you study the book of Acts, what other guiding principles do you see?