

## Family Covenant and Statement of Faith

The River City Church Family Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy which is found in Jesus Christ. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of River City and the individual members of the River City Church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the River City Church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

Each of these functions is in accordance with the document's overall vision to provide an accessible explanation of the Scriptures in hopes that River City Church would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

This Family Covenant is comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, the Statement of Faith, the obligations of River City Church elders to the River City Church body and the obligations of family members to the River City Church body.

## What Is the Church?

The church exists for the display of the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world.

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the Gospel is how the world is being made right. The Gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ.

The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is how God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Cor. 5:17–20). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. Considering this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a

commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2, 9) and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–31). 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, “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’” (1 Cor. 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3–8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at River City is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of the identification of Christ with His church, Christians are expected to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (Eph. 4:1).

## What Is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.” Within the Scriptures, we find several examples of covenants, some between God and man (Gen. 6, 9, 15; Ezek. 20; Hos. 2; Jer. 31; Matt. 26), while others are solely between men (1 Sam. 18; 2 Sam. 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the both parties are bound to adhere to the obligations.

While God’s covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this family covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The covenant of River City Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of River City Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal

obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of the local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church.

If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her covenant and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience.

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgment of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties for God's glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

## River City Statement of Faith

### **Gospel Center Theology**

God is the initiator of Salvation and Jesus is the Hero. God doesn't respond to us – we respond to God's initiative and calling. He saves and secures us for salvation, and we respond only because of and by his grace. Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit are the center and fulfillment of our faith. It is through him, because of him and in him that we come to be God's people, are transformed and have hope for final restoration.

### **Charismatic Pneumatology**

We believe the Holy Spirit is alive and active in regeneration, empowerment, and ongoing filling for the purposes of God in this world. We believe all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still available today, but not one of them is required to give evidence of the baptism or filling of the Spirit.

### **Already-not-yet Eschatology**

We believe the Kingdom of God was inaugurated in Jesus' first coming and will be consummated in his second coming. We live in the in between where we can experience the reign of Jesus while longing for its completion as we also experience the reality that things are not yet fully as they will be within the new heaven and new earth. We acknowledge the variety of views within inaugurated eschatology and allow for this variety within our family.

## **Missional Ecclesiology**

We believe the church is the family of God sent by the Spirit to make disciples of Jesus to all nations throughout the world. We are saved by God's power for God's purposes to bring him glory in all things wherever we are. The church is always being sent by God to accomplish his mission.

## Biblical Obligations of River City Church

### **Elders to the River City Church Body**

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather extensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders covenant...

**to appoint elders and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures** (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

**to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit** (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

**to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love** (Matt. 28:16-20; Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

**to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture** (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).

**to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry** (Eph. 4:11-16).  
**to be on guard against false teachers and teachings** (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).

**to lovingly exercise discipline, when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole** (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20).

**to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of the family covenant stated below** (Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:3).

## **Members to the River City Church Body**

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Rom. 8). The requirements of this family covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant...

**to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues** (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:14–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).

**to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, gospel community, and practice of spiritual disciplines** (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Eph. 5:1–21; 1 Thess. 5:12–22).

**to regularly participate in the life of River City Church by attending worship gatherings, joining a House Church, and serving those within and outside of this our church family** (Acts 2:42–47; Heb. 10:23–25; Titus 3:14).

**to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary** (Matt. 25:14–30; Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 8–9; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

**by God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ** (1 Pet. 1:13–16, 4:1–3). **Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit.**

**to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another** (1 Cor. 8:1–13).

**to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:**

- following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another—the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
- receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Ps. 141:5; Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:9–13; Heb. 12:5–11).

**to do the following when I sin:**

- confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.
- repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6–10).

**to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church** (Eph. 4:1–3; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5).

**to do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:**

- to notify my House Church pastor and or the Lead Pastor.
- to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.