



Church on Mill

Membership Class

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Section 1

Life as God's People in God's Kingdom

I. Every Human Being Belongs to One of Two Kingdoms

A. Kingdom of the World (Matthew 12:26, Revelation 11:15)

B. Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10, Revelation 12:10)

II. God is Adding Citizens to His Kingdom

A. God's kingdom has already come through Jesus Christ.

Luke 18:36a (all Scripture quoted is from the English Standard Version) *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."*

Luke 4:42-44 *And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them,⁴³ but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

B. God's kingdom is received.

Mark 10:13-16 *And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.*

C. To be a Christian is to have been delivered from the kingdom of the world into the kingdom of God.

Colossians 1:13-14 *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

D. Only grace brings enemies into God's kingdom and enables belief and repentance.

Mark 1:14b-15 *Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

John 3:3-15 *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

III. The Citizens of God's Kingdom Embrace God's Priorities

A. Citizens of God's kingdom have new priorities as the people of God.

Matthew 22:35-40 *And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

1. Love God
2. Love People

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

3. Make Disciples

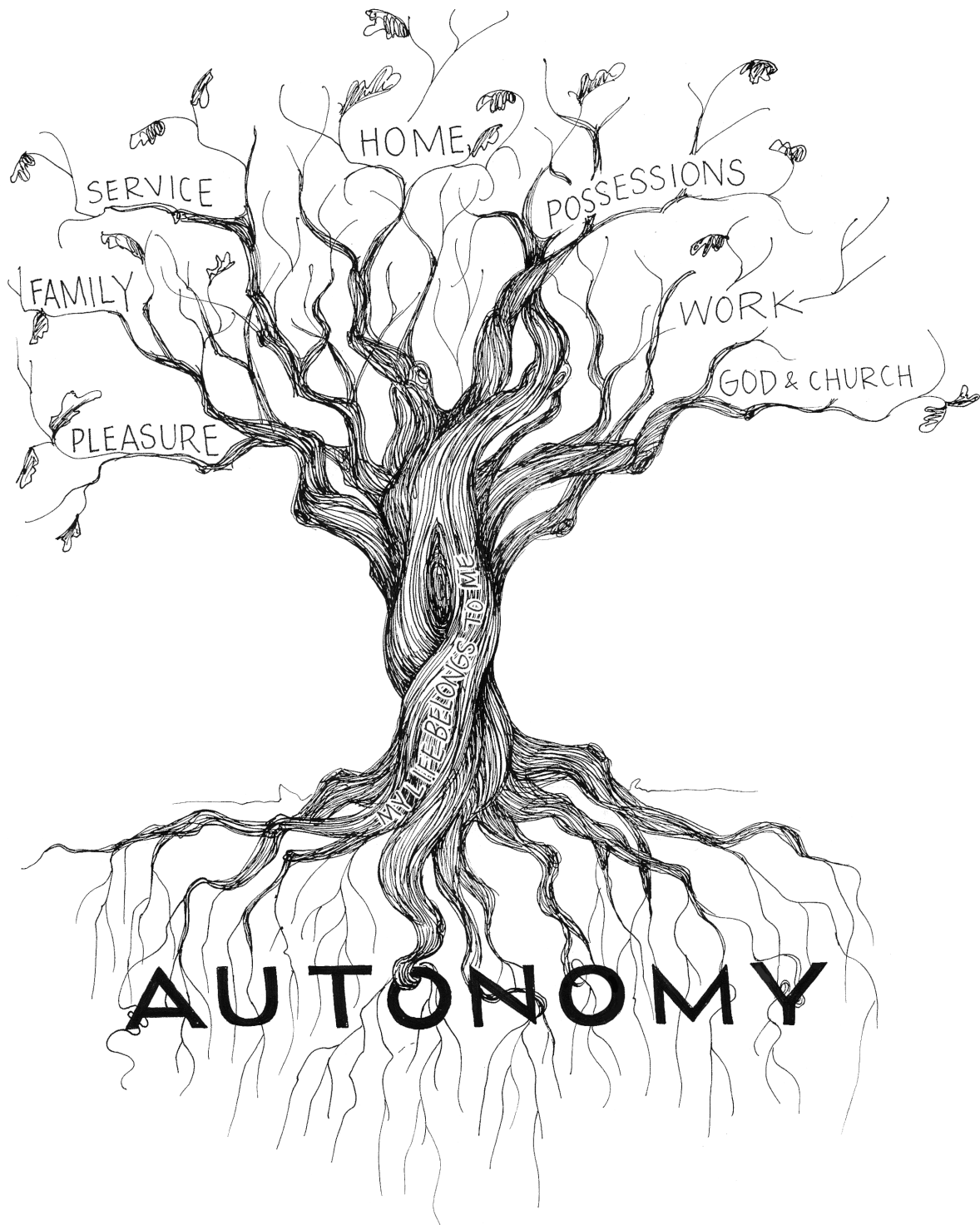
- B. Although still physically present in the world, Christians are already citizens of heaven. While we wait for Jesus's return, we gladly band together as a sign, symbol, and foretaste of God's coming kingdom.
- C. The church exists to worship the King through loving God, loving people, and making disciples. Being a member of a church does not make one a Christian, rather it affirms God has already received you into his kingdom.

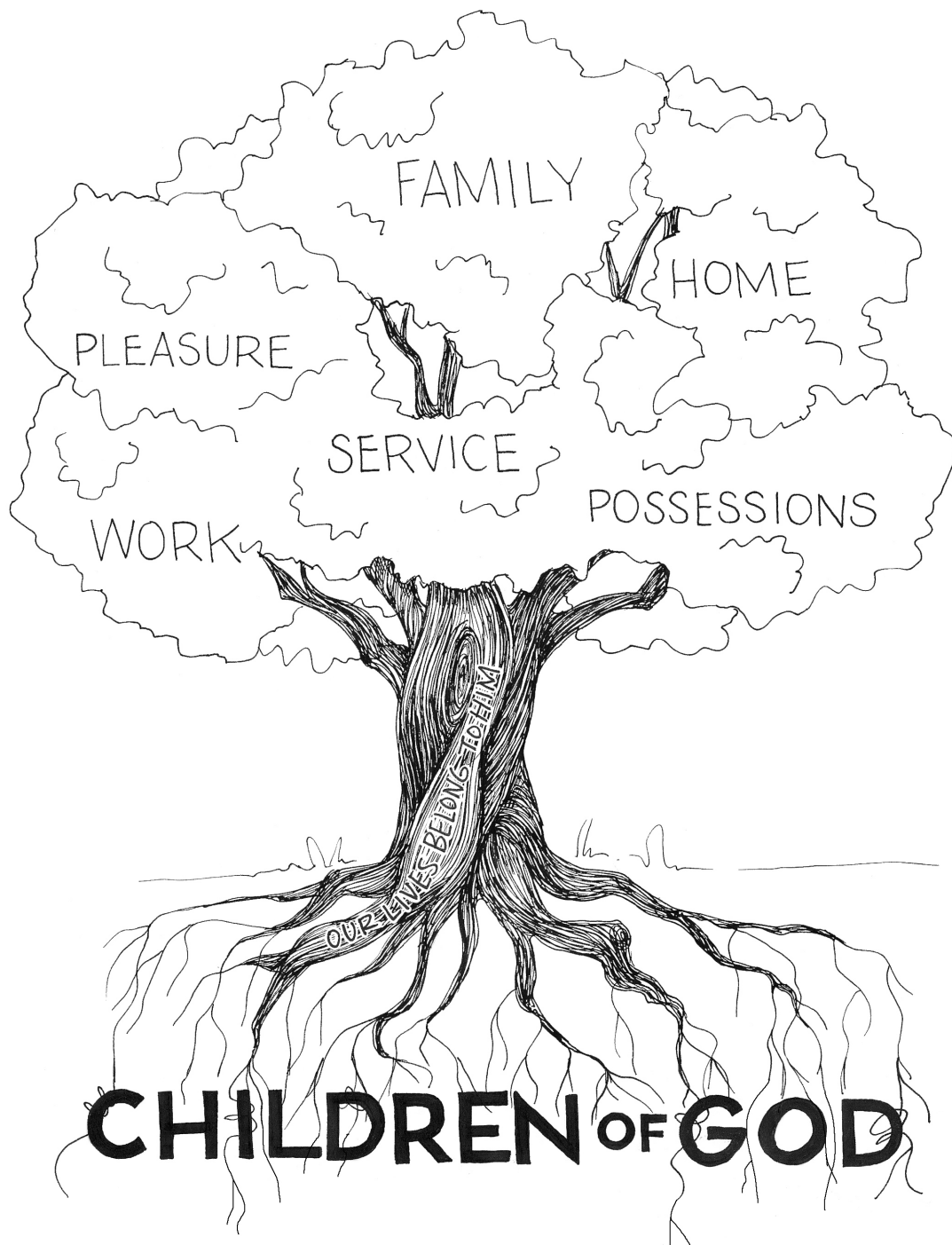
1. A Christian is someone given a new identity through Jesus Christ. Although received individually, this identity is never individualistic: the Christian life is shared life. By grace, God's people live from their identity by listening to God's Word, relying on his enabling grace, and responding with increasing obedience. In other words, we receive the identity of adopted son or daughter in God's family, and then live in light of this shocking new kingdom identity.
2. Citizens of God's kingdom are learning together how to live all of life under the good rule and reign of King Jesus.
3. The ministry of the local church is God's chosen means of kingdom expansion.

God will have a community that knows him and praises him as God. This is the big picture of the Bible.

- D. Applying these truths:

1. The King is gathering a people for Himself. Will you respond to him?
2. To live as God's people, for God's glory, in God's kingdom will require radical re-prioritizations of life. As God's people, our main concern is not our comfort, but His kingdom. (See the following two illustrations.)





The Invitation: By the grace that is yours in Christ and through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, commit to radically re-orient life as a glad participant in kingdom life at Church on Mill.

Section 2

Gospel People

I. What is the Gospel?

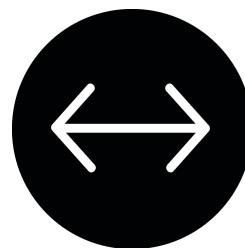
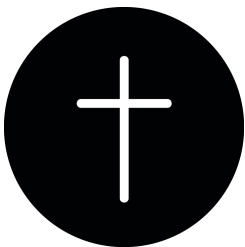
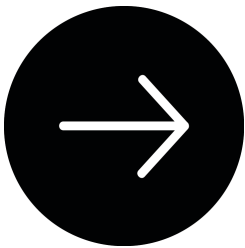
- A. At the most basic level, the Gospel is the good news of God's power to save through the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus (Romans 1:16-17). Think of the contrast between advice and news.
- B. Because all people are sinners, we do not deserve citizenship in God's kingdom. The gospel is God's gracious work of saving people and welcoming them into his kingdom.

II. The Gospel Doctrinally and Narratively

The full-expression of the gospel is best grasped both doctrinally and narratively.

- A. The gospel expressed in doctrinal categories (Titus 2:1).
 - 1. God
 - 2. People
 - 3. Christ
 - 4. Response

B. The gospel expressed as a narrative (Colossians 1:13-23).



III. Applying the Gospel

A. The gospel addresses the three most common “states” of living:

1. Guilt
2. Pride
3. Shame

B. As God’s people in community our joyful response to the gospel is to:

1. Love God
2. Love people
3. Make disciples

C. Through the gospel God is building a people for himself.

1 Peter 2:9-10 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

*Before we can begin
to see the cross as
something done for
us, we have to see
it as something
done by us.*

Section 3

Purpose, Distinctives, and Philosophy of Ministry

I. The Place of the Local Church in God's Kingdom

- A. The ministry of the local church is God's chosen means of kingdom expansion.
 - 1. God gave the church a message to both proclaim and demonstrate (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts).
 - 2. God intends his followers to help each other stick with Jesus in part by meeting together regularly (Hebrews 10:23-25).
 - 3. God gave the "keys of the kingdom" to the church (Matthew 16:13-20, Matthew 18:15-20).
 - a. What – what is the biblical gospel?
 - b. Who – who is by grace confessing Christ and living a lifestyle consistent with the gospel?
- B. Local church membership is a visible affirmation on earth of one's invisible citizenship in heaven.
 - 1. We live as brothers and sisters because God adopted us into his family.
 - 2. We live as the body of Christ because we are all members of his body.

C. How do we live out our citizenship in a local church?

The first three points below (excerpted from Church on Mill's Constitution and Bylaws and found on pages 40-41 of this book) reflect the way our local church specifically exercises the "keys of the kingdom" through humbly upholding the "who" and "what" of the gospel.

1. *Church Governance:* Being a congregationally governed church, all members have the privilege and responsibility to attend members meetings and to prayerfully vote on such matters as may be submitted to a vote.
2. *Organized Ministry:* All members have the privilege and responsibility to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of this church, consistent with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.
3. *Discipleship and Discipline:*
 - a. All members have the privilege and responsibility to serve and disciple one another in love for the growth and unity of the body. This includes giving and receiving biblical instruction and correction in Christlikeness, which are inherent in the preaching, teaching, and all the ministries of and relationships in the church.
 - b. When such instruction and correction consistently fail, more formal discipline may be necessary. Such discipline shall ordinarily progress through an escalating series of actions, from a private word of admonition to the congregation formally removing an individual from membership (excommunication), normally upon the recommendation of the Elders. Excommunication shall only occur when a member's unrepentant action(s) render doubtful his or her profession of faith. The goal of corrective discipline shall always be restorative, that is, the salvation and sanctification of the one being disciplined.
 - c. The purposes of instruction and correction are: for the repentance, spiritual growth, reconciliation, and in the case of excommunication, the salvation of the individual (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:1-11); for the instruction in righteousness and the good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 10:24-25); for the purity of the Church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2); for the good of the Church's corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14); and for the glory of God, by helping Christians reflect God's holy character (Deut. 5:11; John 15:8; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:12).
4. The formal decisions we make as a congregation in Members Meetings represent significant moments, and the ways we participate in organized ministries are crucial. However, these actions should not be viewed as the whole scope of what it means to live out the gospel together. More than an event to attend or a duty to fulfill, biblical church membership is a way of life.
 - a. The "one anothers" of the New Testament inform the rhythms of church life.

- b. Our Membership Statement of Fellowship serves as a helpful summary of the commitments members make to God and each other (to be discussed in section 6).

II. Our Vision: The Purpose and Values of Church on Mill

A. Preamble

In light of Jesus's parting words recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, our vision is the same as that of every Christian church throughout time and around the world. As those redeemed by the death of Jesus Christ, we long to bring him glory. The primary way we do that is through our life together as a church, as this community of Christians demonstrates Jesus's love through our love for one another. We gather to sing his praises, offer our prayers, hear his Word, care for each other, and share Christ with unbelievers. In addition, we serve side by side to see each of us transformed into Christlikeness, and the Lord Jesus worshipped as King both here in Tempe and to the ends of the earth. To aid with clarity and memorability, the essence of this vision is expressed below as our Purpose and Values.

B. Purpose

A church family making disciples and helping churches for the worship and glory of God.

A. Values

1. *Big God* – Our God is glorious in every way and rules over all as the Sovereign King, so we seek to worship him passionately and submit to him completely every moment of every day.
2. *Clear Gospel* – We long to be known as people who are unmistakably clear that the gospel of Jesus Christ is God's power to save sinners.
3. *Word Work* – The Word of God does the work of God, so we devote ourselves to hearing God speak through faithful preaching, teaching, and discipling.
4. *Meaningful Membership* – The local church makes the gospel visible as we gather to worship our Risen Lord, practice the one anothers, and help each other follow Jesus throughout the week: since Christ is committed to us, we are committed to each other as fellow members of Christ's body.
5. *Heavenly Diversity* – Heaven will be populated by believers from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation; therefore, we yearn for this church family to be a diverse yet united group of Christians who serve as a foretaste of what is to come.
6. *Conscious Dependence* – Through means of grace such as bold prayer, patient suffering, consistent witnessing, mutual encouragement, and sacrificial living, we intentionally rely on the Holy Spirit's help throughout life.

7. *Joyful Obedience* – As people redeemed by Jesus, we labor to be so formed by the gospel that we happily obey God in all things.
8. *Strategic Witness* – Since God has providentially placed Church on Mill across the street from ASU, a university of worldwide influence, we especially seek to share Christ and our lives with American and international students in hopes of their new birth and life-long ministry in Christ.
9. *Glad Sending* – With spiritually unreached and underserved communities abounding in Arizona, the United States, and around the world, we ask God to raise from among us pastors, missionaries, and church members to plant, revitalize, and strengthen churches elsewhere.

III. Our Philosophy of Ministry

- A. Diversity in the church best demonstrates the kingdom of heaven (Revelation 5:9-12).
- B. Leaders are to equip the members for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4).
- C. Geographical proximity tends to enhance opportunities for life-on-life evangelism and discipleship.
 1. A local church family should be as simple as possible so that ministry can be maximized; therefore, people not programs are emphasized at Church on Mill. Church on Mill has structure but the structure is designed to fulfill our purpose, not to maintain institutional traditions.
 2. Our purpose stays the same but methodology must change to remain effective.
- D. At the core, our approach to ministry is centered on gospel-driven disciple-making (Matthew 28:19-20, Colossians 1:28).
 1. You are a disciple and a disciple-maker! The questions are: Who are you a disciple of? Who are you inviting others to be disciples of?
 2. Disciple-making happens in the context of biblical community (John 13:35, John 17:20-21). We encourage this through a culture of disciple-making, ministry teams, Gospel Communities, Connection Classes, and training opportunities.
- E. Training future pastors, missionaries, and leaders for faithful gospel ministry is not optional. Leaders of godly character and theological depth are urgent priorities. It is the responsibility of every church to send equipped leaders to start, revitalize, and bless other churches.
- F. For more information on our philosophy of ministry, read Luke or Ephesians in the New Testament of the Bible, attend Disciplemakers training, or read the summary of The Trellis and the Vine by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne (Appendix 5).

Section 4

Our Structure

I. Under Christ's Authority Our Structure Starts with You

- A. Every member of the Church on Mill family shares responsibility for the ministry of the church.
- B. Ministry occurs both formally and informally.
 - 1. Formally through groups and ministry teams.
 - 2. Informally through the interconnected relationships of church members. We deeply value a culture of disciple-making, through which all members practice the “one another” commands of the New Testament.

II. Environments of Membership



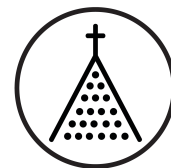
Individual



Discipling



Groups



Gathered Church

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

III. Disciple-Making in Community

A. Gathered Church

1. Church on Mill gathers corporately every Sunday to celebrate the Risen Savior, share the gospel, encourage one another, pray, and get equipped for lives of holiness and mission through the preaching of Scripture. We also regularly observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
2. Our worship gathering is designed to build up and send out.
3. We gather every Sunday at 9:30am and 11:15am. The church family works together to make all the components of corporate worship gospel-centered.

B. Connection Classes

1. Connection Classes seek to connect people to meaningful study of Scripture and encourage healthy relationships across the church family.
2. Connection Classes are short-term (typically six weeks) and occur on-site at 9:30am and 11:15am on Sunday mornings. A three-year commitment to these classes will allow you to interact with all the major themes of the Bible. Our hope is that members attend these when they are not in a gathering or serving, as it is healthy to spend all of Sunday morning with the church family.

C. Gospel Communities: A gospel community is a group of disciples sharing life together and living their shared life on mission for the glory of God.

1. Gospel, Community, Mission (1 Peter 2:9-10)
2. Every gospel community seeks to encourage evangelism and disciple-making amongst neighbors, friends, family, coworkers, and classmates.
3. Groups typically meet off-site. For more information and to contact a leader go to the church website or see Tad Skinner (tad@churchonmill.org) who serves as Executive Pastor.

D. Ministry Teams

1. The vast majority of the ministry at Church on Mill happens through the membership! We are grouped into groups (above) and teams (below) of people who support a specific aspect of church life.
2. Current teams include:
 - Christian Challenge
 - Life Among the Nations
 - Worship Gathering Team

- Preschool & Children's Team
 - Greeters Team
 - Fellowship Team
 - Youth Team
 - Property Team
 - Teaching Team (GC's, Connection Classes, Disciplemakers)
3. It would be an honor to have you serve on a ministry team. Every follower of Jesus is gifted by God and called to serve Him (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Ephesians 2:8-10). Email Kyle Nielsen (kyle@churchonmill.org) for more information about a specific ministry team.

IV. Organizational Structure

The Bible outlines a specific structure for the local church which can be summarized by the phrase “elder-led congregationalism.”

- A. Membership: The church is her members! God entrusts the final authority of and responsibility for the local church to the members.

God's grace motivates members to (for example):

1. Oversee membership (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5-6, 2 Corinthians 5-8)
2. Meet regularly (Hebrews 10:24-25)
3. Preserve unity and promote holiness in life-on-life relationships (Acts 2:42-47, Ephesians 2-3)
4. Grow in and hold fast to the gospel (2 Peter 3:18, Hebrews 10:23)
5. Guard the gospel message by removing elders who teach a false gospel (Galatians 1:6-9)
6. Follow the elders' leadership (Hebrews 13:17)

- B. Eldership: elders serve as the pastors of the church. They are responsible to shepherd the church as a team of lay and vocational equals. They are responsible to:

1. Protect the church from false teaching and teachers (Acts 20:17-35)
2. Feed and thereby equip the church by passionately preaching and teaching God's Word (Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Timothy 6:3-10, Titus 3:8-11)
3. Lead the church (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
4. Care for the spiritual needs of the church (James 5:14, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
5. Serve as examples of Christlikeness (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Peter 5:1-4)

*A local church is
a group of
Christians who
regularly gather in
Christ's name to
officially affirm
and oversee one
another's
membership in
Jesus Christ and
his kingdom
through gospel
preaching and
gospel ordinances.*

Current elders include:

Chuck Newkirk
Mike Bond
Randy Hagler
Tad Skinner

- C. Diaconate: deacons assist the elders in serving the church by providing godly servanthood in the various service-oriented functions of the church (Acts 6:1-7). This protects the church from unmet needs and the elders from a lack of time to focus on the ministries of prayer, teaching the Word, and shepherding the church. The following roles are fulfilled by deacons (who welcome your involvement in their respective areas of ministry):

Alison Fisher	Family Ministry Volunteer Recruitment
Dan Koury	Financials
David Brown	Properties
Katina Skinner	Women's Discipleship and Mentoring
Kayde DeVeau	Children's Ministry
Lindsey Berry	Corporate Worship
Megan Roberts	Preschool Ministry
Nolan Rose	Ordinances
Stephen Shelton	Benevolence
Tanyon Berry	Corporate Worship
Tim Fisher	Youth Ministry

V. Church Staff

- A. The purpose of the church staff is to equip people for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- Each Director or Pastor has particular ministry areas he or she oversees; additionally, each staff member provides oversight to ministry teams and participates in a Gospel Community. The staff is here to serve you and wants to know you personally.

- Current staff members include:

a. Core Staff Team

Brandon Reimus	Director of Christian Challenge	American college ministry
Chuck Newkirk	Lead Pastor / Elder	Preaching, leadership, and vision
Gracie Bond	Pastoral Assistant to the Lead Pastor / Director of Communication	Administrative and ministry support and communication
Hansley Mussotte	Director of Music and Media	Leadership of Gatherings
Isabel Han	Campus Missionary	American college ministry

Kyle Nielsen	Administrative Assistant	Office management and communication
Maddie Reimus	Director of College Ministry, Women's Ministry and Small Groups	American college ministry
Mike Bond	Director of Family Ministries	Equipping parents, deacons, and kids
Shing Chow	Interim Director of Life Among the Nations	International college ministry
Tad Skinner	Executive Pastor / Elder	Stewardship, administration/implementation of vision, counseling
Tanyon Berry	Director of Life Among the Nations	International college ministry
Zach Hsu	Campus Missionary	American college ministry

b. Ministry Interns, Residents, and Apprentices (Temporary Training Positions)

James Stover	Pastoral Resident	Training under lead pastor
John Pope	Pastoral Resident	Training under lead pastor
Jordan Garcia	Collegiate Ministries Resident	International college ministry

c. Support Staff

David Brown	Internal Maintenance	Building management
Mark Crenshaw	Grounds	Lawn management
Stephanie Posavek	Accountant	Finances

B. The church staff may be reached in the following ways:

Staff's email addresses are firstname@churchonmill.org and office phone is (480) 967-0569.

VI. Stay Informed

- A. Be pro-active in relationship building, discipling, and getting involved in a group.
- B. Read the blog. A general church blog ("News Blog") is emailed to members weekly. This is the best way to stay current on what is happening at Church on Mill.
- C. Serve. Quickly identify areas of need, interest, and spiritual giftedness. Your service is needed and this is a terrific way to grow and meet people.
- D. Make sure to attend Members Meetings. The church family has important membership gatherings six times per year on Sunday evenings at 6:00pm.

Section 5

Membership Statement of Faith

I. The Tri-une God

We believe in one God,¹ eternally existing in three equally divine, unified Persons: the Father,² the Son,³ and the Holy Spirit,⁴ who know, love, and glorify one another.⁵ This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love⁶ and in his holiness.⁷ He is the Creator of all things and is worthy to receive all glory and adoration.⁸ He knows,⁹ sustains,¹⁰ and rules over all,¹¹ and providentially brings about his good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation.¹²

II. Revelation

We believe that God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in creation¹³ and has supremely revealed himself in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word.¹⁴ Moreover, God has

¹ Exod. 15:11; 20:2–3; Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4–5; 32:39; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 44:6–8; 45:5–6, 14, 21–22; 46:9; John 17:3; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19

² John 13:3; 20:17; Rom. 1:7; 15:6; 1 Cor. 15:24; Phil. 2:11; James 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 1:6

³ Isa. 9:6; John 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Col. 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8–10; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20

⁴ Gen. 1:2; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Cor. 3:16; Heb. 9:14

⁵ Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 3:35; 5:20; 8:54; 13:32; 14:31; 16:14; 17:1, 5, 24

⁶ Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:5, 15; 1 John 4:8–10, 16

⁷ Exod. 15:11; Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:26; Josh. 24:19; 1 Sam. 2:2; Pss. 22:3; 99:3, 5, 9; Isa. 6:3; 57:15; 1 Pet. 1:16; Rev. 4:8; 15:4

⁸ Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:26, 28; 45:18; Jer. 10:12; John 1:3; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 4:11; 10:6

⁹ Isa. 46:10; 1 John 3:20

¹⁰ Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3

¹¹ Ps. 103:19; Dan. 4:35; Matt. 10:29–30; Rom. 11:36

¹² Gen. 50:20; Eph. 1:11; 3:11

¹³ Ps. 19:1–6; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19–20

¹⁴ John 1:1, 14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1–2; Rev. 19:13

revealed himself in his written Word, the verbally inspired sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.¹⁵ It is complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do,¹⁶ and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks.¹⁷ The Bible is to be believed, as God's perfect instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.¹⁸

III. Creation of Humanity

We believe God created men and women in his image and for his glory.¹⁹ Equal yet different, Adam and Eve were brought together in a one-flesh marriage union that establishes the only biblical pattern of sexual relations for men and women.²⁰ In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.²¹ Both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and develop their full potential in the ministries of the people of God.²²

IV. The Fall

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God,²³ distorted that image and forfeited his original purity by falling into sin through Satan's temptation.²⁴ As a result of sin, all creation is cursed, and all human beings²⁵ are alienated from God, corrupted, and condemned finally and irrevocably to death.²⁶ The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand.²⁷

V. The Plan of God

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation.²⁸ In love, God commands and implores all people to repent and believe in Jesus,²⁹ for there is no other name given under

¹⁵ Pss. 12:6; 19:7; Prov. 30:5; Luke 24:27, 44; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19–21

¹⁶ Ps. 119:9; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1 Pet. 1:23

¹⁷ John 17:17

¹⁸ Josh. 1:8; Ps. 19:7–11; Matt. 5:17–20; 28:18–20; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 2:1; James 1:22

¹⁹ Gen. 1:26–27; 5:1–2; 9:6; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 10:31; James 3:9

²⁰ Gen. 2:18–24; Matt. 19:6; Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–7:5; 11:11–12; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:5; Heb. 13:4

²¹ Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18–19; 1 Tim. 2:9–12; 3:4–5; Titus 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:1–7

²² Acts 2:16–18; Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10

²³ Gen. 1:26–27; 2:5–8

²⁴ Gen. 3:1–24

²⁵ Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22

²⁶ Gen. 2:17; 6:5; Pss. 58:3; 130:3; 143:2; Eccles. 7:20; 9:3; Isa. 1:6; 59:2; 64:6; Jer. 13:23; 17:9; John 8:34; Rom. 1:18–3:20, 23; 5:16, 18; 6:23; 8:5–8, 10; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19; Titus 1:15; 1 John 1:8, 10

²⁷ Isa. 59:1–20; 61:1–4; Matt. 19:25–26; John 3:16–19, 36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22; Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9

²⁸ Gen. 12:2–3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8; Rev. 5:9; 7:9–10

²⁹ Ezek. 18:23; Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14–15; 1 Tim. 2:3–4

heaven by which we must be saved.³⁰ God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace place faith in Jesus and will one day glorify them³¹—all to the praise of his glorious grace.³²

VI. The Gospel

We believe that the biblical gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom and power to those who are being saved.³³ This good news is centered on the historical events of the cross and resurrection.³⁴ By his life and death, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute.³⁵ He died for our sins to reconcile us to God, and by his resurrection was vindicated by his Father, defeated Satan, broke the power of death, and brought us everlasting life.³⁶ When the gospel is received, believed, and held firmly, individuals are saved from eternal condemnation into this everlasting life.³⁷

VII. The Redemption of Christ

We believe that the eternal Son³⁸ became flesh: fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures.³⁹ The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary.⁴⁰ He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father,⁴¹ lived a sinless life,⁴² proclaimed the kingdom of God,⁴³ performed miraculous signs,⁴⁴ was crucified to satisfy God’s just wrath,⁴⁵ arose bodily from the dead,⁴⁶ and ascended into heaven.⁴⁷ As the mediatorial King,⁴⁸ he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty,⁴⁹ and is our High Priest, righteous Advocate, and Savior.⁵⁰

VIII. The Justification of Sinners

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of sin. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making full satisfaction to

³⁰ Acts 4:12

³¹ Rom. 5:1–8:39; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:6; 3:21; Col. 3:3–4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 10:14; 1 John 3:2–3

³² Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; 1 Thess. 1:2–4; 2 Thess. 2:13

³³ Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:19–31

³⁴ Matt. 28:1–20; Acts 2:14–39; 1 Cor. 15:13–19

³⁵ Isa. 53:5–6; Rom. 4:25; 5:1–11

³⁶ John 12:31; 14:6; 2 Cor. 5:18–19; 15:54–55; Gal. 1:4; Col. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:18; 2:11; 20:6

³⁷ Joel 2:32; 1 Cor. 15:1–2, 11; Heb. 10:23; Rev. 20:15

³⁸ Isa. 9:6; John 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5, 24; Col. 1:17; Rev. 1:17

³⁹ John 1:14; Rom. 1:3–4; 9:5; Phil. 2:7; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14

⁴⁰ Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38; Gal. 4:4

⁴¹ Matt. 26:39; John 6:38; 18:11; Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8; 10:5–7

⁴² John 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5

⁴³ Matt. 4:17, 23; 24:14; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 4:43

⁴⁴ John 20:30–31; Acts 2:22

⁴⁵ Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

⁴⁶ Matt. 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–53; John 20:1–21:25; Acts 10:41; 1 Cor. 15:1–8

⁴⁷ Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9–11

⁴⁸ 1 Tim. 2:5

⁴⁹ Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33–34; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22

⁵⁰ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1

God's justice on our behalf.⁵¹ By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by grace through faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God.⁵²

IX. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to his people. Sent by the Father and the Son,⁵³ the other Helper is present with and in believers.⁵⁴ He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment,⁵⁵ and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith.⁵⁶ In him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus,⁵⁷ such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed,⁵⁸ sanctified,⁵⁹ gifted,⁶⁰ adopted into God's family,⁶¹ and participate in the divine nature.⁶²

Sound doctrine is essential equipment for navigating the twisting city streets of our lives. So don't leave home without it.

X. The Kingdom of God

We believe that those who have been saved by God and regenerated by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God⁶³ and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins; the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God; and the promise of the glory yet to be revealed.⁶⁴ Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace;⁶⁵ therefore, as citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves,⁶⁶ doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God.⁶⁷ The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation;⁶⁸ it inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.⁶⁹

⁵¹ Isa. 53:4–6, 12; Rom. 5:15–19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14

⁵² Gen. 15:6; Rom. 3:21–5:1; Gal. 2:15–16; 3:8, 11, 24; Eph. 1:7–8; 2:8

⁵³ John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7

⁵⁴ John 14:16–17, 26; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12–15; 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal 5:16–18; Eph. 1:17–19

⁵⁵ John 16:8–11

⁵⁶ Ezek. 36:27; 37:14; John 1:13; 3:3–8; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Eph. 2:1–6; Col. 2:13; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 5:1

⁵⁷ Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Rom. 6:1–4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12

⁵⁸ Titus 3:5

⁵⁹ Rom. 7:6; 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2

⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 12:7–11

⁶¹ John 1:12–13; Rom. 8:15–17, 23; Gal. 4:4–6; Eph. 1:5–6

⁶² Eph. 4:24; Heb. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:2

⁶³ Matt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23–24; Mark 9:47; 10:23–25; Luke 18:24–25; John 3:5; Acts 14:22

⁶⁴ Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Rom. 11:27; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; 2 Cor. 3:6–18; Heb. 8:1–13; 9:15–22; 10:15–18; 13:20–21

⁶⁵ John 14:15; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–26; 1 John 2:2–6, 9–11, 15–17, 19, 29; 3:6–9, 14–15, 24; 4:7, 16, 20; 5:18

⁶⁶ Lev. 19:18; Rom. 13:9–10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8

⁶⁷ Gal. 6:10

⁶⁸ Matt. 12:28; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 11:20; John 3:3, 5; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9–10; 15:24–28; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13

⁶⁹ Gen. 12:1–3; Col. 1:13; Rev. 21:1–4

XI. God's New People

We believe that God's new covenant people are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies.⁷⁰ 'This universal Church'⁷¹ is manifest in local churches⁷² of which Christ is the only Head,⁷³ thus each local church is, in fact, the church, the family of God,⁷⁴ the bride of Christ,⁷⁵ the assembly of the living God,⁷⁶ the body of Christ,⁷⁷ and the pillar and foundation of the truth.⁷⁸ The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline,⁷⁹ her great mission,⁸⁰ and, above all, by her love for God,⁸¹ and by her members' love for one another⁸² and the world.⁸³ These distinguishing qualities are fostered in the congregational church through a humble, biblically qualified male eldership⁸⁴ and a passionate, servant-oriented male and female diaconate.⁸⁵

XII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible and communal actions which serve as signs of the immense goodness of God toward his people in that they place before our eyes the invisible actions God accomplished in salvation.⁸⁶ Baptism is a one-time, symbolic act of obedience for every individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple.⁸⁷ The Lord's Supper is a regular, symbolic act of obedience for all genuine followers of Christ.⁸⁸ It symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly together throughout the Christian life as both a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death and demonstration of our unity with other members of Christ's body.⁸⁹

XIII. The Mission of the Church

We believe God's people should increasingly be marked by Christlikeness, prayerfulness, joyful

⁷⁰ Eph. 1:20; 2:6; Heb. 12:22–24

⁷¹ Matt. 16:18; Acts 8:3; 9:31; 1 Cor. 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Eph. 1:22–23; 3:10, 21; 4:4; 5:23–25, 27, 32; Phil. 3:6; Heb. 12:23

⁷² Matt. 18:17; Acts 13:1; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 16:19; 2 Cor. 11:8; Col. 4:15–16; Philem. 1:2

⁷³ Eph. 1:22–23; 4:15–16; 5:23

⁷⁴ Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17

⁷⁵ Eph. 5:25–32

⁷⁶ 1 Cor. 5:4; James 2:2

⁷⁷ 1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:15–16; Col. 2:19

⁷⁸ 1 Tim. 3:15

⁷⁹ Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 2 Cor. 2:6–8; Gal. 6:1–2; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15

⁸⁰ Matt. 28:19–20

⁸¹ Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22; Eph. 6:24; James 1:12; 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 John 2:15; 5:2–3

⁸² John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:9–10, 13; 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 16:14; Gal. 5:13–14; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; Heb. 13:1; James 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 1 John 2:7–11; 3:10–18; 4:7–8, 11–12, 16–21; 2 John 5

⁸³ Matt. 5:43–47; Luke 6:27–36; Rom. 12:14, 17–21

⁸⁴ 1 Tim. 2:8–3:7; Titus 1:5–9

⁸⁵ Rom. 16:1–2; 1 Tim. 3:8–13

⁸⁶ Matt. 3:11; 28:19; John 1:33; 4:14; 6:51; 7:37–38; 1 Cor. 6:11; 11:23–26; Eph. 2:4–6; Phil. 3:20; Col. 2:9–15; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Pet. 3:21–22

⁸⁷ Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:37–41; 8:36–38; 10:44–48; 16:30–33; Rom. 6:3–4

⁸⁸ Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 10:14–21

⁸⁹ Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:17–20; John 6:32–58; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:17–34; 12:13

obedience, love for God, and love for neighbor,⁹⁰ as members seek the fulfillment of the church's mission. The mission of the church, graciously given by God, is to make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father and by teaching believers to obey all God commands.⁹¹ As salt and light,⁹² disciples eagerly and faithfully sacrifice to seek and save the lost,⁹³ love others in word and deed,⁹⁴ work for righteousness and justice,⁹⁵ and care for all in need.⁹⁶

XIV. The Restoration of All Things

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated.⁹⁷ We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell,⁹⁸ as our Lord himself taught,⁹⁹ and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness.¹⁰⁰ On that day the Church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ, with all sin and its wretched effects forever banished.¹⁰¹

Membership Statement of Faith (Adopted August 25, 2019). This document is a compilation of numerous doctrinal statements. It is largely adapted from the Gospel Coalition's Confessional Statement, which is part of their Foundation Documents. These Foundation Documents were adopted by the Council of The Gospel Coalition on May 22, 2007, and revised on April 12, 2011. Used by permission of The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org), Deerfield, IL 60015. Other doctrinal statements influencing this statement include, but are not limited to, The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000, The Nicene Creed, The Apostles Creed, The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, and the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith 1833.

⁹⁰ Matt. 22:37–40; John 14:15; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 5:1–2

⁹¹ Matt. 28:19–20; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4; 1 Cor. 10:31–11:1; Phil. 1:12–18

⁹² Matt. 5:13–16

⁹³ 1 Cor. 9:19–23

⁹⁴ Gal. 6:10

⁹⁵ Lev. 19:9–18; Amos 5:24; Mic. 6:8; James 1:27–2:10

⁹⁶ 1 John 3:16–18

⁹⁷ Matt. 16:27; Mark 13:32–37; John 5:21–29; Acts 1:11; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:4; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:6–7; 19:11–16; 20:11–15; 21:1–2

⁹⁸ Isa. 66:15–24; Matt. 13:40–42; Mark 9:47–48; Rom. 2:3–11; 2 Thess. 1:5–10; Jude 6–7; Rev. 14:9–11; 20:10–15

⁹⁹ Matt. 22:11–13; 25:30, 41–46; Mark 9:43–48; Luke 16:19–31

¹⁰⁰ Isa. 65:17; Matt. 25:31–40; John 14:3; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1–5

¹⁰¹ Isa. 35:1–10; 1 Cor. 15:51–57; 2 Cor. 5:2–4; Eph. 5:27; Phil. 3:21; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 7:13–17; 19:7–9; 21:2; 22:3–5

Section 6

Membership Statement of Fellowship

I. What is Church Membership?

- A. Church membership is the biblical method we use to give:
 - 1. Christians a formal opportunity to say, “As a member of God’s Kingdom [universal Church], I believe this is the local church God has led me to commit myself to.”
 - 2. And the church the opportunity to say, “We hear your confession of faith and see evidence of God’s saving work in your life: welcome into the family.”
- B. A metaphor for membership: Think of belonging to a church not as joining a club but being recognized by and given significant responsibility in an embassy.
- C. The local church is the healthy ecosystem God provides for his sons and daughters to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it includes the responsibility to uphold biblical beliefs and pursue holiness.

II. Why Have Formal Membership?

There are many reasons to have a formal church membership. These reasons include:

- A. Membership strikes at the very heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. A Christian is a forgiven child of God who, as a disciple, seeks to make disciples who make disciples in the context of a local church.

- B. Membership is the context through which the “what” and “who” of the gospel are practiced (1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2:6, Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15-20, Matthew 28:18-20).
- C. Some form of membership clearly took place in the churches of the Bible.
1. Records were kept of widows so they could be supported (1 Timothy 5:3-16).
 2. Elders and deacons were put in place by church leadership and members (Acts 6:1-6, Acts 20, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1).
 3. Elders are charged with responsibility for a specific group of people (1 Peter 5:1-4) and are held accountable for how they care for members (Hebrews 13:17).
 4. Members are commanded to gather together (Hebrews 10:23-25).

*The lives of
Christians
together display
visibly the gospel
they proclaim
audibly.*

III. Eldership Commitment: What Do Elders Pledge to Do?

- A. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-10)?
- B. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, complete in their revelation of God’s will for salvation, and sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do (2 Timothy 3:16)?
- C. Do you affirm the Eldership Statement of Faith and commit to teach in accordance with it, since it contains the truth taught in Scripture (Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 15)?
- D. Do you gladly agree to this church’s understanding of a congregationally-governed, elder-led, and deacon-served local church, and do you pledge to submit to your fellow elders in the Lord (Acts 20:17-38)?
- E. Do you promise to protect this church from false teaching and false teachers by faithfully guarding biblical doctrine, and do you pledge to promote the purity and peace of this church even if persecution or opposition may arise (Acts 20:28-31, 1-2 Timothy)?
- F. Do you promise to feed this church by passionately preaching and teaching the whole counsel of Scripture, in order that the biblical gospel be proclaimed and the members be equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 4:1-5)?
- G. Do you promise to lead this church through sacrificial, courageous, and humble pastoral oversight which will remind the church of God’s good authority (1 Peter 5:1-4)?

- H. Do you promise to care for the spiritual needs of all church members, and as fellow members, receive the care of this church, even as you help members learn to diligently care for one another (1 Peter 5:1-4)?
- I. Do you promise to serve as examples of mature, increasing Christlikeness, in order to adorn the gospel in your manner of life and invite the church into ever-growing holiness (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4)?
- J. Notwithstanding the many demands placed upon the elders, do you take personal responsibility to devote yourself to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the shepherding of God's people, in such a way that Church on Mill, and the Lord Jesus himself will be blessed (Philippians 2-3, 1 Peter 5:1-4)?

IV. Membership Statement of Fellowship: What Do Members Pledge to Do?

- A. As those who have been brought to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God, we are now Christians, saved from the just penalty and enslaving power of sin. Being new creations in union with Christ, we will, with God's help, live as God's people. Therefore, we now, by God's grace and for God's glory, joyfully commit as one body in Christ.
- B. We will walk together in Christian love with humility, gentleness, and patience, laboring for the maturity and fruitfulness of this body (John 17:20-23; Eph. 4:3-13).
- C. We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor to bear each other's burdens and sorrows, always remembering to pray for one another (Rom. 12:15; James 5:16).
- D. We will be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).
- E. We will exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and if occasion requires, we will humbly plead with one another to cease in sinful behavior and encourage the confession of sin to one another (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Gal. 6:1-5; 1 John 1:6-10).
- F. We will regularly gather together in corporate worship, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves (Acts 2:46; Heb. 10:24-25).
- G. We will pursue and encourage in each other a deeper understanding of God and his will through personal spiritual disciplines, relying upon God's power to enable us to live out what we learn so that God is glorified, others are blessed, and we are transformed (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Tim. 4:7-10).
- H. We will strive to properly manage the resources God has given us, including our time, bodies, spiritual gifts, talents, finances, and possessions (Prov. 3:9-10; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:7-31; 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15; Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 4:1-16; 5:15-18).
- I. We will aim to bring up all who are in our care and through example, word, and deed seek

the salvation of our friends, family, community, and all the nations (Deut. 6:4-25; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:9; Eph. 5:22-6:4; Col. 4:5).

- J. We will seek, by God's power, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and pursuing holiness, remembering as new creations in Christ we have a special obligation to live holy lives (Rom. 13:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:16-26).
- K. We will work together for the continuance of a faithful gospel ministry in this church, as we sustain its corporate worship, ordinances, mission, doctrine, and, under the final authority of God's Word, its governing documents.
- L. We will, if we move from this church, as soon as possible, unite with some other Christian church among whom we can carry out the spirit of this statement and the principles of God's Word.
- M. These commitments do not imply that we will never fall short. Nevertheless, the desire of our hearts is to fulfill each of these responsibilities in the power of the Holy Spirit. Honesty, humility, and the pursuit of holiness are ordinary for the people of God, but sinlessness will not be a daily reality until we are all in the presence of Jesus Christ. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all (2 Cor. 13:14).

V. How Does Membership Begin?

- A. You may start the process of becoming a part of the Church on Mill family by completing the membership application on page 61. A member of the Elder Team will contact you to set up a Membership Interview. We look forward to getting to know you!
- B. Church membership is for anyone who has made a confession of faith in Christ, gives evidence of regeneration, has been baptized after his or her confession of faith, and agrees to the Membership Commitment.
 - 1. The Membership Commitment states that, with God's help, each member affirms the Bible's teachings as expressed in the Membership Statement of Faith and affirms his or her commitment to biblical behavior as expressed in the Membership Statement of Fellowship.
 - 2. A sample of the Membership Commitment is available on pages 31-32.
- C. After your membership interview, the Elder you met with will either recommend you to the whole Elder Team for membership or will offer to continue meeting with you to increase your readiness for membership. Once the Elder Team reviews your application, you will be announced on a Sunday morning with the designation "Recommended for Membership." Finally, at the next regularly scheduled Members Meeting, the members of Church on Mill will vote on whether or not to accept you into membership. An Elder will contact you soon after the vote to inform you of the members' decision.

IV. How Does Membership End?

Membership is a commitment to God and the Church on Mill family, and it is the Church on Mill family's commitment to you. Since it is a meaningful commitment, we are faithful never to end membership flippantly. The two points below (excerpted from Church on Mill's Constitution and Bylaws and found on pages 41-42 of this book) reflect the way we work together to conclude membership:

- A. *Cessation:* Cessation of membership in Church on Mill shall occur:
 - 1. Upon the death of a member;
 - 2. When a majority of the members present at a members meeting vote to recognize a member's commitment to another church of orthodox Christian doctrine;
 - 3. When the majority of the members present at a members meeting vote to recognize the voluntary resignation of a member not subject to a discipline process;
 - 3. Following the sustained self-professed apostasy of a member, after which the members shall be informed of such apostasy in a members meeting; or
 - 4. As an act of corrective discipline (excommunication), normally at the recommendation of the Elders, when approved by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a members meeting.
- B. *Exceptions:* The church, normally through the Elders on the church's behalf, shall have the right to refuse a member's request to be released from membership to join another church, or a member's voluntary resignation, if the member is in a disciplinary process. The purpose of such refusal would be to protect the member from thwarting the biblical processes God may use to bring about faith, repentance, and restoration, and to ensure the church has done everything possible to pursue the biblical goals of discipline in a spirit of love and humility.

V. A Commitment of Love to the Body of Christ

- A. Love for God and love for people is what drives church membership. Would you prayerfully consider if this is the church that God would have you make a commitment of love to?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.⁸ Love never fails.*

Membership Commitment

Affirmation of the Membership Statements of Faith and Fellowship

Membership Statement of Faith

Section 1. The Tri-une God We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine, unified Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things and is worthy to receive all glory and adoration. He knows, sustains, and rules over all, and providentially brings about his good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation.

Section 2. Revelation We believe that God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in creation and has supremely revealed himself in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, God has revealed himself in his written Word, the verbally inspired sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. It is complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. The Bible is to be believed, as God's perfect instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

Section 3. Creation of Humanity We believe God created men and women in his image and for his glory. Equal yet different, Adam and Eve were brought together in a one-flesh marriage union that establishes the only biblical pattern of sexual relations for men and women. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. Both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and develop their full potential in the ministries of the people of God.

Section 4. The Fall We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original purity by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result of sin, all creation is cursed, and all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted, and condemned finally and irrevocably to death. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand.

Section 5. The Plan of God We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation. In love, God commands and implores all people to repent and believe in Jesus, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace place faith in Jesus and will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace.

Section 6. The Gospel We believe that the biblical gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom and power to those who are being saved. This good news is centered on the historical events of the cross and resurrection. By his life and death, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He died for our sins to reconcile us to God, and by his resurrection was vindicated by his Father, defeated Satan, broke the power of death, and brought us everlasting life. When the gospel is received, believed, and held firmly, individuals are saved from eternal condemnation into this everlasting life.

Section 7. The Redemption of Christ We believe that the eternal Son became flesh: fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, proclaimed the kingdom of God, performed miraculous signs, was crucified to satisfy God's just wrath, arose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest, righteous Advocate, and Savior.

Section 8. The Justification of Sinners We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of sin. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by grace through faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God.

Section 9. The Power of the Holy Spirit We believe that the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to his people. Sent by the Father and the Son, the other Helper is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith. In him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, gifted, adopted into God's family, and participate in the divine nature.

Section 10. The Kingdom of God We believe that those who have been saved by God and regenerated by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins; the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God; and the promise of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace; therefore, as citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation; it inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

Section 11. God's New People We believe that God's new covenant people are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal Church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each local church is, in fact, the church, the family of God, the bride of Christ, the assembly of the living God, the body of Christ, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and the world. These distinguishing qualities are fostered in the congregational church through a humble, biblically qualified male eldership and a passionate, servant-oriented male and female diaconate.

Section 12. Baptism and the Lord's Supper We believe that Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible and communal actions which serve as signs of the immense goodness of God toward his people in that they place before our eyes the invisible actions God accomplished in salvation. Baptism is a one-time, symbolic act of obedience for every individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple. The Lord's Supper is a regular, symbolic act of obedience for all genuine followers of Christ. It symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly together throughout the Christian life as both a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death and demonstration of our unity with other members of Christ's body.

Section 13. The Mission of the Church We believe God's people should increasingly be marked by Christlikeness, prayerfulness, joyful obedience, love for God, and love for neighbor, as members seek the fulfillment of the church's mission. The mission of the church, graciously given by God, is to make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father and by teaching believers to obey all God commands. As salt and light, disciples eagerly and faithfully sacrifice to seek and save the lost, love others in word and deed, work for righteousness and justice, and care for all in need.

Section 14. The Restoration of All Things We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the Church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ, with all sin and its wretched effects forever banished.

Membership Statement of Fellowship

As those who have been brought to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God, we are now Christians, saved from the just penalty and enslaving power of sin. Being new creations in union with Christ, we will, with God's help, live as God's people. Therefore, we now, by God's grace and for God's glory, joyfully commit as one body in Christ.

We will walk together in Christian love with humility, gentleness, and patience, laboring for the maturity and fruitfulness of this body (John 17:20-23; Eph. 4:3-13).

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor to bear each other's burdens and sorrows, always remembering to pray for one another (Rom. 12:15; James 5:16).

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We will, if we move from this church, as soon as possible, unite with some other Christian church among whom we can carry out the spirit of this statement and the principles of God's Word.

These commitments do not imply that we will never fall short. Nevertheless, the desire of our hearts is to fulfill each of these responsibilities in the power of the Holy Spirit. Honesty, humility, and the pursuit of holiness are ordinary for the people of God, but sinlessness will not be a daily reality until we are all in the presence of Jesus Christ. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all (2 Cor. 13:14).

With God's help, I affirm the Bible's teachings as expressed in the Membership Statement of Faith and affirm my commitment to biblical behavior as expressed in the Membership Statement of Fellowship.

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 2

**Constitution & Bylaws
of
Church on Mill**

*First Southern Baptist Church of Tempe
Tempe, Arizona*

Constitution of Church on Mill
First Southern Baptist Church of Tempe
Tempe, Arizona

adopted August 16, 2010

updated August 25, 2019

updated January 26, 2020

updated December 4, 2022

Article I
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This Membership Statement of Faith is a compilation of numerous doctrinal statements. It is largely adapted from the Gospel Coalition's Confessional Statement, which is part of their Foundation Documents. These Foundation Documents were adopted by the Council of The Gospel Coalition on May 22, 2007, and revised on April 12, 2011. Used by permission of The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org), Deerfield, IL 60015. Other doctrinal statements influencing this statement include, but are not limited to, The Baptist Faith and Message of

2000, The Nicene Creed, The Apostles Creed, The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, and the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith 1833.

Article II Membership Statement of Fellowship

As those who have been brought to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God, we are now Christians, saved from the just penalty and enslaving power of sin. Being new creations in union with Christ, we will, with God's help, live as God's people. Therefore, we now, by God's grace and for God's glory, joyfully commit as one body in Christ.

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We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor to bear each other's burdens and sorrows, always remembering to pray for one another (Rom. 12:15; James 5:16).

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We will, if we move from this church, as soon as possible, unite with some other Christian church among whom we can carry out the spirit of this statement and the principles of God's Word.

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Article III Church Vision

Section 1. Preamble

In light of Jesus's parting words recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, our vision is the same as that of every Christian church throughout time and around the world. As those redeemed by the death of Jesus Christ, we long to bring him glory. The primary way we do that is through our life together as a church, as this community of Christians demonstrates Jesus's love through our love for one another. We gather to sing his praises, offer our prayers, hear his Word, care for each other, and share Christ with unbelievers. In addition, we serve side by side to see each of us transformed into Christlikeness, and the Lord Jesus worshipped as King both here in Tempe and to the ends of the earth. To aid with clarity and memorability, the essence of this vision is expressed below as our Purpose and Values.

Section 2. Purpose

A church family making disciples and helping churches for the worship and glory of God.

Section 3. Values

- A. *Big God* – Our God is glorious in every way and rules over all as the Sovereign King, so we seek to worship him passionately and submit to him completely every moment of every day.
- B. *Clear Gospel* – We long to be known as people who are unmistakably clear that the gospel of Jesus Christ is God's power to save sinners.
- C. *Word Work* – The Word of God does the work of God, so we devote ourselves to hearing God speak through faithful preaching, teaching, and discipling.
- D. *Meaningful Membership* – The local church makes the gospel visible as we gather to worship our Risen Lord, practice the one anothers, and help each other follow Jesus throughout the week: since Christ is committed to us, we are committed to each other as fellow members of Christ's body.
- E. *Heavenly Diversity* – Heaven will be populated by believers from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation; therefore, we yearn for this church family to be a diverse yet united group of Christians who serve as a foretaste of what is to come.
- F. *Conscious Dependence* – Through means of grace such as bold prayer, patient suffering, consistent witnessing, mutual encouragement, and sacrificial living, we intentionally rely on the Holy Spirit's help throughout life.
- G. *Joyful Obedience* – As people redeemed by Jesus, we labor to be so formed by the gospel that we happily obey God in all things.
- H. *Strategic Witness* – Since God has providentially placed Church on Mill across the street from ASU, a university of worldwide influence, we especially seek to share Christ and

- our lives with American and international students in hopes of their new birth and life-long ministry in Christ.
- I. *Glad Sending* – With spiritually unreached and underserved communities abounding in Arizona, the United States, and around the world, we ask God to raise from among us pastors, missionaries, and church members to plant, revitalize, and strengthen churches elsewhere.

*** Certification Follows ***

I, _____, Secretary of Church on Mill First Southern Baptist Church of Tempe, an Arizona nonprofit corporation, do hereby certify that the foregoing Constitution was duly adopted at a regular members meeting of said church and held on the 26th day of January, 2019, and that the same does constitute the Constitution of said church.

DATED this ____ day of _____, 20 ____

_____, Secretary

Bylaws of Church on Mill

First Southern Baptist Church of Tempe

Tempe, Arizona

adopted May 18, 1960
updated October 4, 1964
updated March 1, 2009
updated September 20, 2015
updated January 26, 2020
updated December 4, 2022

Article I

Organization

Church on Mill First Southern Baptist Church of Tempe (hereinafter referred to as "the church"), is hereby organized upon the foundation of the Christian faith and principles set forth in the Holy Bible. The purpose of these Bylaws is to govern the church body in an orderly manner consistent with the laws of Arizona relating to nonprofit corporations and the Christian principles upon which the church is founded.

The church shall have and continuously maintain in the State of Arizona a known place of business and a statutory agent, both of which shall be registered with the Arizona Corporation Commission.

Article II

Membership

Section 1. Admission to Membership

- A. *Requirements for Membership:* To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized (normally by immersion) in obedience to Christ following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. With God's help, each member shall affirm the Bible's teachings as expressed in the Membership Statement of Faith and shall affirm his or her commitment to biblical behavior as expressed in the Membership Statement of Fellowship.
- B. *Admission to Membership:* To be admitted to membership, a person shall be recommended for membership (normally by the Elders), and thereafter accepted by a majority vote of the members present at a members meeting. Upon admission, a new member shall relinquish membership in any other churches.

Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities of Membership

- A. *Church Governance:* Being a congregationally governed church, all members have the privilege and responsibility to attend members meetings and to prayerfully vote on such matters as may be submitted to a vote.

- B. *Organized Ministry:* All members have the privilege and responsibility to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of this church, consistent with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.
- C. *Discipleship and Discipline:*
 - 1. All members have the privilege and responsibility to serve and disciple one another in love for the growth and unity of the body. This includes giving and receiving biblical instruction and correction in Christlikeness, which are inherent in the preaching, teaching, and all the ministries of and relationships in the church.
 - 2. When such instruction and correction consistently fail, more formal discipline may be necessary. Such discipline shall ordinarily progress through an escalating series of actions, from a private word of admonition to the congregation formally removing an individual from membership (excommunication), normally upon the recommendation of the Elders. Excommunication shall only occur when a member's unrepentant action(s) render doubtful his or her profession of faith. The goal of corrective discipline shall always be restorative, that is, the salvation and sanctification of the one being disciplined.
 - 3. The purposes of instruction and correction are: for the repentance, spiritual growth, reconciliation, and in the case of excommunication, the salvation of the individual (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:1-11); for the instruction in righteousness and the good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 10:24-25); for the purity of the Church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2); for the good of the Church's corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14); and for the glory of God, by helping Christians reflect God's holy character (Deut. 5:11; John 15:8; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:12).
 - 4. The church will comply with legal requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse; church discipline shall not take the place of or delay any such reporting.

Section 3. Cessation of Membership

- A. *Cessation:* Cessation of membership in Church on Mill shall occur:
 - 1. Upon the death of a member;
 - 2. When a majority of the members present at a members meeting vote to recognize a member's commitment to another church of orthodox Christian doctrine;
 - 3. When the majority of the members present at a members meeting vote to recognize the voluntary resignation of a member not subject to a discipline process;
 - 4. Following the sustained self-professed apostasy of a member, after which the members shall be informed of such apostasy in a members meeting; or
 - 5. As an act of corrective discipline (excommunication), normally at the recommendation of the Elders, when approved by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a members meeting.
- B. *Exceptions:* The church, normally through the Elders on the church's behalf, shall have the right to refuse a member's request to be released from membership to join another church under subsection 3(A)(2) above, or a member's voluntary resignation under subsection 3(A)(3) above, if the member is in a disciplinary process. The purpose of such refusal would be to protect the member from thwarting the biblical processes God may use to bring about faith, repentance, and restoration, and to ensure the church has done

everything possible to pursue the biblical goals of discipline in a spirit of love and humility.

- C. *Communication:* If a member under corrective discipline, or an excommunicated member, attends another church, the Elders may inform that church of the corrective discipline and the grounds for that action.

Article III Meetings

Section 1. Worship Services

Public services for worship shall be held on Sundays. Other public services or organizational meetings for worship may be held at such other occasions as are deemed best for the advancement of the cause of Christ.

Section 2. Members Meetings

- A. *Regular Members Meetings:* Regular members meetings shall be held at least quarterly, or more frequently if determined by the Elders, at dates normally set by the Elders. At least one (1) week's notice of the date and time of regular members meetings shall be given at a regularly scheduled worship service, in addition to such other notice as the Elders determine or as required by these Bylaws. A separate annual members meeting shall not be required. At the final regular meeting in a calendar year, the Elders shall present a proposed budget for the forthcoming year for approval by the members.
- B. *Special Members Meetings:* The Elders may call a special members meeting at which the members may take significant, urgent action. At least one (1) week's notice of the date and time of a special members meeting shall be given at a regularly scheduled worship service, unless extreme urgency (as determined by a majority vote of the Elders) renders such notice impracticable, in which case such notice as is practicable shall be provided. Additionally, the members may call a special members meeting to perform any responsibilities delineated in these Bylaws by submitting a written request to the Elders, signed by one-third (1/3) of the membership. In the event of a written request from the members, such meeting shall be held within two (2) weeks of receipt of the request by the Elders. At least one (1) week's notice of the date and time of the special members meeting shall be given at a regularly scheduled worship service.
- C. *Quorum:* Ten percent (10%) of the members of the church shall constitute a quorum. A simple majority (greater than 50% of members voting) shall be required to adopt any matter, unless a higher percentage is required by these Bylaws.
- D. *Presiding Officer and Meeting Procedures:* The Elders shall appoint an Elder to preside at each regular members meeting, and any special members meeting called by the Elders. Members meetings shall be conducted with procedure appropriate to biblical guidelines and Christian conduct. No matter shall be voted on without reasonable opportunity for questions and discussion at a meeting to which all members are invited.
- E. *Secretary:* The Elders shall appoint a non-Elder as a secretary of the church, who shall be responsible to maintain a correct roll of members of the church and to record and maintain minutes of members meetings. Minutes of meetings shall be available to members within two (2) weeks after the members meeting.

Article IV Church Leadership

Section 1. Governance Generally

Church on Mill shall be governed by a biblical structure; namely, congregationalism, eldership, and diaconate. The members and Elders shall be mutually accountable to one another. Members are responsible to follow Elder leadership (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4), and Elders are responsible to bring before the members the biblically-identified issues set forth in point A. below.

- A. *Congregationalism*: Church on Mill is congregationally governed. God entrusts the final authority of and responsibility for the local church to the members; this is expressed biblically in four areas of decision-making. The members are responsible for: preserving unity and promoting holiness in matters of significant dispute between members (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-8); guarding the gospel message by removing Elders who teach a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9); protecting the purity and reputation of the Church by overseeing her membership (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:1-8:24; cf. Matt. 18:15-17); and affirming the church's budget and office holders.
- B. *Eldership*: Church on Mill is Elder led. God cares for, teaches, and protects the local church through a plurality of qualified and called men who share these pastoral responsibilities.
- C. *Diaconate*: Church on Mill is served by Deacons. God frees the Elders to concentrate on spiritual oversight and provides for the physical care, administrative needs, and day-to-day functioning of the church through qualified and called men and women.

Section 2. Elders/Pastors

- A. *Responsibilities*: Elders serve as the pastors of the church. They are responsible to shepherd the church as a team of equals. They protect the church from false teaching and teachers, feed and thereby equip the church by passionately preaching and teaching God's Word, lead the church through sacrificial, courageous and humble oversight, care for the spiritual needs of the church, and serve as examples of Christlikeness (Acts 20:17-35; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-18; 6:3-10; Titus 3:8-11; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 4:1-4; 5:3). The Elders shall constitute the Board of Directors of the corporation as required by Arizona law.
- B. *Number and Length of Service*: There shall be at least three (3) Elders, and the Elders shall include at least one (1) member of church staff and at least one (1) member who is not a member of church staff (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Any Elder who is not employed on the church staff shall be appointed for a period of four (4) years, after which he shall take a sabbatical of one (1) year, during which sabbatical the Elder shall not be permitted to vote on matters before the Elders. The serving Elders shall submit to the members for reaffirmation of further service as an Elder any qualified Elder who has completed his sabbatical. An Elder who is a member of church pastoral staff shall serve as an Elder as long as he holds such pastoral staff position. It is recommended that church staff implement appropriate alternative methods to provide rest for such Elders.
- C. *Qualifications*: Men who are members, called by God, and affirmed by the membership as Elders shall satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. No Elder shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure as an Elder.
- D. *Affirmation of Elders*: The body of Elders shall propose new Elders to the members at least two (2) weeks prior to a members meeting at which the members may affirm or

- reject any proposed Elder. A candidate for the office of Elder shall hold office if affirmed by a vote of at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members present at the meeting.
- E. *Removal of Elder:* Upon the assent of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a members meeting any Elder shall be removed from office. In addition, pursuant to 1 Timothy 5:19-25, the body of Elders may remove any Elder on the evidence of at least two (2) witnesses that the Elder does not satisfy the biblical qualifications of the office set forth in subsection C above. Any Elder may voluntarily step down from the office for any reason other than failure to satisfy the biblical qualifications of the office.
 - F. *Lead Pastor:* The Lead Pastor shall be a member of the Elders, and shall remain an Elder as long as he serves as Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor's main responsibilities shall be preaching and teaching God's Word and leading the Elders in discerning and communicating the biblical vision for the church.
 - 1. *Qualifications and Responsibilities of Lead Pastor.* In addition to the qualifications and responsibilities of all Elders, the Lead Pastor shall be especially recognized as qualified, trained, and gifted in preaching and teaching of God's Word. The Lead Pastor shall have primary responsibility for overseeing the ministry of the pulpit, administration of ordinances, oversight of church staff, and any of these responsibilities may be delegated at his discretion.
 - 2. *Selection of Lead Pastor.* Upon a vacancy in the position of Lead Pastor, the Elders shall nominate, subject to affirmation by the members, a lead pastor selection team of church members, which team shall include at least one (1) Elder. Upon the lead pastor selection team and the Elders reaching unanimous agreement that a single particular candidate for Lead Pastor shall be brought forth, that candidate shall be brought before the church members for a vote of affirmation. Notice of a members meeting to consider such a candidate shall be publicly given for at least three (3) consecutive weeks prior to the meeting. A candidate for the office of Lead Pastor shall be affirmed if affirmed by a vote of at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members present at the meeting.
 - 3. *Removal of Lead Pastor.* The Lead Pastor may be removed pursuant to the same procedures applicable to the removal of other Elders, except that for the Lead Pastor to be removed by the Elders, removal shall be effective only upon the unanimous agreement of all remaining Elders.
 - G. *Staff Pastors:* Staff members with broad pastoral responsibilities, as outlined in subsection A, shall be subject to affirmation as Elders pursuant to the procedures set forth in subsection D.

Section 3. Deacons

- A. *Responsibilities:* Deacons shall assist the Elders in serving the church by providing leadership over the various service oriented functions of the church, so that the Elders may concentrate their efforts on the Word of God and prayer (Acts 6:1-7). Deacons may call upon other church members to fulfill the service-oriented functions.
- B. *Qualifications:* Men and women who are members, called by God, and affirmed by the membership as Deacons shall satisfy the qualifications for the office of Deacon as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- C. *Affirmation of Deacons:* The Elders shall propose new Deacons to the church members at least two (2) weeks prior to a members meeting at which the members may affirm or

- reject any proposed Deacon. A candidate for the office of Deacon shall hold office if affirmed by a vote of at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members present at the meeting.
- D. *Length of Service:* The serving Elders shall submit to the members for reaffirmation for further service as a Deacon any qualified Deacon who has completed four (4) years of service since his or her last reaffirmation by the members.
- E. *Removal of Deacon:* Upon the assent of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a members meeting, any Deacon shall be removed from office. In addition, the Elders may remove any Deacon on the evidence of at least two (2) witnesses that the Deacon does not satisfy the biblical qualifications of the office set forth in subsection B above. Any Deacon may voluntarily step down from the office for any reason other than failure to satisfy the biblical qualifications of the office.

Article V

Ministry Teams

The Deacons and the Elders may form Ministry Teams. Such teams shall deal with administrative functions, ministry areas, discipleship, facilities, etc. Ministry Team leaders shall be active members of the church. Other ministry team members serve at the team's discretion.

Article VI

Contracts, Checks, Deposits, and Funds

Section 1. Contracts

The Elders may authorize any Elder or Elders, agent or agents to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the church, and such authority may be general or may be confined to specific instances.

Section 2. Checks

All checks, drafts or orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the church shall be signed by such authorized person(s), and in such manner as shall from time to time be determined by resolution of the Elders.

Section 3. Deposits

All funds of the church shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the church in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the Elders may select.

Section 4. Gifts

The Elders may accept on behalf of the church any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for any purpose of the church.

Section 5. Treasurer

The Elders shall appoint a non-Elder as a Treasurer who shall be responsible to maintain accurate records of all funds received and paid, and shall produce monthly and annual financial reports to be

distributed at the regular and annual members meetings and maintained by the Secretary in the church's records.

Article VII

Purchase of Real Property

In the event the church owns, or elects to purchase real property, the following covenants, conditions, and restrictions shall apply to such real property:

Section 1.

The deed conveying the ownership of the real property to the church shall contain covenants, conditions, and restrictions consistent with those set forth in this Article VII.

Section 2.

Real property owned by the church as Grantee shall be used for the benefit of the members of the church who are determined to be in harmony with and affiliation with the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention ("ASBC"), even if the members determined to be in harmony with the ASBC shall be a minority of the membership.

Section 3.

For church members to be in harmony with and affiliation with the ASBC requires that the messengers of the Church shall be recognized and given full voting privileges at the annual meetings of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

Section 4.

Should the church messengers be denied such recognition and voting privileges by the ASBC, or in case the organic existence of the church shall cease, or in case its house of worship or the real property owned by the church shall be abandoned or shall cease to be used as a house or place of Southern Baptist worship by those in harmony with or affiliated with the ASBC, as above set forth, or in case same shall be sold by the church or the title be transferred by legal process or otherwise, without the written consent of the ASBC, then in each and every such case the title to the above described property shall revert to and become vested in Valley Rim Baptist Association (the "Association"), or its successor, to be used for a church or mission in harmony with and affiliated with the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

Section 5.

If, at such time of reversion of the title to the Association, the Association or a successor shall not be in existence, or shall fail to be in harmony with and affiliated with the ASBC, then title shall revert to the ASBC, or its successor, to be used for church and mission purposes.

Section 6.

No reversion shall render invalid or operate in any way against the lien of any mortgage or deed of trust given with respect to the conveyed property in good faith, and for value and on any such reversion Grantor shall take title to the conveyed land subject to any such mortgage or deed of trust. Provided, however, that should any such mortgage or deed of trust be foreclosed, then the title acquired by such foreclosure, and the person or persons who thereby and thereafter become the

owner or owners of the conveyed premises, shall be subject to and bound by all the restrictions contained in this instrument.

Section 7.

Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, the provisions in this Article VII of the Bylaws may not be amended or repealed except by eighty-five percent (85%) of the voting members of the church at any special members meeting, after such proposal for amendment or repeal has been made available, in writing, to all church members at the worship services taking place during at least the two (2) weeks prior to the special members meeting wherein the vote will be conducted.

Article VIII Liabilities and Indemnification

Section 1. Non-liability

No member, Elder, officer, agent, or employee of the church is liable for the acts or failure to act of any other member, Elder, officer, agent, or employee of the church. No member, Elder, officer, agent, or employee of the church shall be liable for his or her action or failure to act under these Bylaws, excepting only acts or omissions arising out of his or her willful malfeasance. Any action taken by the church shall not create personal liability on its members, Elders, or officers.

Section 2. Indemnification

The church shall indemnify, defend, protect, and hold harmless its members, Elders, officers, and employees to the maximum extent permitted by law.

Article IX Suspension, Amendment, or Repeal

The Constitution, Bylaws, or Articles of Incorporation may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those present and voting at any members meeting of the church, after such proposal for amendment or repeal has been made available, in writing, to all church members at the worship services taking place during at least the two (2) weeks prior to the members meeting wherein the vote will be conducted. Article VII may not be amended or repealed except as stated in Article VII Section 7.

** * Certification Follows * **

I, _____, Secretary of Church on Mill First Southern Baptist Church of Tempe, an Arizona nonprofit corporation, do hereby certify that the foregoing Bylaws were duly adopted at a regular members meeting of said church and held on the 26th day of January, 2020, and that the same do constitute the Bylaws of said church.

DATED this ____ day of _____, 20 ____

_____, Secretary

Appendix 3

Eldership Statement of Faith

I. The Tri-une God

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine, unified Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

II. Revelation

We believe that God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

III. Creation of Humanity

We believe people exist to glorify God. God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only biblical pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to

serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. With reference to church offices, God calls qualified men to be Pastors (Elders) and qualified men and women to be Deacons.

IV. The Fall

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan’s temptation. As a result of sin, all creation is cursed, and all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God’s own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand. The only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

V. The Plan of God

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe. God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have chosen to place faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace.

VI. The Gospel

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is: “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

VII. The Redemption of Christ

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, proclaimed the kingdom of God, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, appeared to many, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe

that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and is preparing a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

VIII. The Justification of Sinners

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was lovingly given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

IX. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ and, as the other Helper, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

X. The Kingdom of God

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the promise of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to all for the glory of

God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

XI. God's New People

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal Church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each local church is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

XII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Jesus Christ instituted two ordinances for his church, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. These visible and communal actions serve as signs of the immense goodness of God toward his people in that they place before our eyes the invisible actions God accomplished in salvation. Christian baptism is a one-time, symbolic act of obedience for every individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple. As a testimony to God, the church, oneself, and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Water baptism serves as a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death, burial, and resurrection. It signifies that one's former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a believer's release from the mastery of sin. The Lord's Supper is a regular, symbolic act of obedience for every individual who is genuinely saved and committed as a member of a church. It symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly together throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, signify our unity with other members of Christ's body, and anticipate his second coming.

XIII. The Mission of the Church

We believe God's people should increasingly be marked by Christlikeness, prayerfulness, joyful obedience, love for God, and love for neighbor, as members seek the fulfillment of the church's mission. The mission of the church, graciously given by God, is to make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father and by teaching believers to obey all God commands. As salt and light, disciples eagerly and faithfully sacrifice to seek and save the lost, love others in word and deed, work for righteousness and justice, and care for all in need.

XIV. The Restoration of All Things

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the Church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

Eldership Statement of Faith (Adopted November 11, 2013; Readopted December 30, 2015). This document represents the theological convictions of the Elders of Church on Mill. Elders affirm and teach in accordance with these biblical convictions. This Statement is a compilation of numerous doctrinal statements, and is largely adapted from The Gospel Coalition's Confessional Statement, which is part of their Foundation Documents. These Foundation Documents were adopted by the Council of The Gospel Coalition on May 22, 2007, and revised on April 12, 2011. Used by permission of The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org), Deerfield, IL 60015. Other doctrinal statements influencing this Statement include, but are not limited to, The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000, The Nicene Creed, The Apostles Creed, The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, and The New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith 1833.

Appendix 4

An Approach to the Baptism and Membership of Children



A Theological Position Paper

Introduction

One of the greatest privileges in life is raising children. When God entrusts parents with precious little ones, they rightly yearn to concern themselves with the comprehensive good of their children. From tending to a 2:00 a.m. cry for milk, to the admonition not to blow a college scholarship by skipping classes, parents ache for their children to mature into productive members of society.

Christian parents, however, have a deeper aim than simply instructing children to provide a firm handshake when meeting an adult, to refrain from burping at the dinner table, and to position oneself for a successful career. Godly parents' highest objective is for their children to grow up to know, love, and obey God. That goal stands head and shoulders above the rest: no other parental aspiration is even in the same galaxy!

As your pastors, we pray regularly for you and your children by name. Among our requests to God, we pray most often that a lifestyle of faith and repentance would come to define both parent and child. As Jesus himself said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Faith and repentance are not single-use; rather, they are daily habits for the people of God. Of

course they mark the earliest moments of the Christian life, but they continue throughout the entire process of spiritual maturation.

In addition to praying for you, Church on Mill aims to approach preschool, children, and youth ministries in a manner that equips and supports you as lead disciplers. Churches should supplement, never replace, the unparalleled influence of parents in the spiritual development of their children. Although this approach to family ministries is neither new nor innovative, it may be less common than alternatives which assume parents will not do the work of discipling their little ones. We believe you can and, in fact, must! We are here to support, not supersede or supplant. Therefore, it is imperative for parents to have vibrant faith and clear theological convictions.

As parents model the Christian life and teach the Scriptures to their children in the home, the home can become a precious greenhouse of gospel fluency. One is fluent in a language when she no longer thinks in her first language and then translates into a second. Parents want to immerse their homes in the Scriptures such that, by God's grace, children would learn to trust God's character, that all Scripture is true, and that the power of

the gospel is immensely practical to daily life.¹⁰² As (ideally) both mother and father teach the Bible and model lives of faith and repentance, kids learn what the Christian life looks like. Be it over spilt milk, straight A's, challenges with peers, or speeding tickets, parents reinforce or deny the gospel by how they respond to the stuff of a typical day. Parents, your children will learn their functional definition of Christianity mainly from you, so aim to be faithful to Scripture and fluent in the gospel.

As children hear God's Word in the ministries of the church, develop relationships with Christians, and live in homes with gospel fluent parents, many of them will eventually initiate conversations about spiritual truths: they may be especially interested in how to become Christians, get baptized, and be named among the members of the church. If this happens, praise God!

What is Church on Mill's approach to these matters? The remainder of this paper will seek to present our approach as your pastors to the salvation, baptism, and membership of children. We hope it will equip you to walk humbly and confidently with your children in these most important spiritual developments. This topic is sensitive and a paper will not exhaust the questions that may arise on the subject, so please reach out to talk through it with us at any point.

The Question: When to Baptize and Open the Responsibilities of Membership to Children?

Spend any time at all around Church on Mill and you will notice how richly God has blessed us with children! Children are a gift from God, primarily to parents but also to the church as a whole. The elders are passionate

about caring both for you as a parent, and for your children. In addition, the whole church yearns to see every child grow into a settled, rich, solid, saving faith in Jesus Christ, and wants to help them mature in their discipleship as they grow up. As our "Membership Statement of Fellowship" states:

We will aim to bring up all who are in our care and through example, word, and deed seek the salvation of our friends, family, community, and all the nations.

We are convinced that God works wonderfully in the lives of children. Over the years, we have seen children at Church on Mill—sometimes very young ones—display a wonderful sensitivity to spiritual realities, a heartfelt love for Jesus, and even a desire to tell others about him. In fact, God sometimes brings young children to a saving faith in Jesus. You may be seeing signs of conversion in your own child's life. Praise God!

We have also seen children at Church on Mill profess Christ only to walk away from the Lord as older children, teenagers, or young adults. This is, of course, heartbreaking. The frequency of such walking away is by no means a Church on Mill anomaly, yet the elders have been troubled by it for years. We have, therefore, sought Scripture, wisdom from church history among those who hold to believer's baptism, and counsel from like-minded scholars and churches. This paper is a product of these endeavors.¹⁰³

When parents see potential signs of conversion in their child's life, the question will naturally arise: When should

¹⁰² Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-19, Ephesians 6:1-4, 2 Timothy 3:14

¹⁰³ Special thanks to 3rd Avenue Baptist Church, Cheverly Baptist Church, Sojourn Community Church, University Baptist Church, and Whitton Avenue Bible

Church for their counsel and usage of documents. With permission, portions of this paper are adapted from one or more of these churches' work. Additional resources of note are available as the last section in this document.

my child be baptized and added as a member of the church? That is a good question, and it is right for that question to press on parents' hearts. It is not, however, as easy to answer as it might seem on the surface; in fact, Christians have come to thoughtful, principled, careful—and yet different—conclusions on it. Among adherents to believer's baptism, two broad approaches exist in present-day churches:

Baptize quickly
or
Wait awhile

In other words, is it best for the church to act more-or-less immediately upon a child's profession of faith, baptizing her and recognizing her as a member of the church *quickly*, even at a young age?

Or, is it best to *wait awhile*, encouraging the child to continue growing in his understanding of the gospel and love for Jesus, until it is more clear that his profession of faith is considered, deep, and genuinely personal—that is, until his profession becomes discernibly credible to the church and a readiness for the privileges of membership is present?

Sometimes people approach this difficult question as if there is a clear, open-and-shut biblical command, and that to take one position or another is to disobey God. As your pastors, we want you to know that the important question of when to baptize children who profess Christ is not a matter of simple

obedience to a doctrine clearly settled by Scripture, but instead is one of Christian wisdom and prudence on an issue not directly addressed by Scripture.¹⁰⁴ In fact, both sides may make prudential arguments for their respective positions.

Our Policy and Process

- 1) Baptism is to be observed when the credibility of one's conversion becomes naturally evident to the church and the person is reasonably prepared for the responsibilities of church membership. These are, of course, crucial expectations for anyone seeking baptism irrespective of one's age.

Based on these principles, the elders of Church on Mill believe it best for parents to wait until their believing child is at least 13 years old before encouraging him or her to seek baptism. We advise waiting until then. We are also happy to wait until after age 13 if you feel that is wise.

- 2) Determining the credibility of a child's profession of faith, independent desire for the Lord, and a readiness for membership are often challenging prior to at least the early stages of adolescence.¹⁰⁵ This does not imply any resistance to the notion that God saves some children younger than that: at issue is primarily both the elders' and congregation's ability to affirm one's profession and readiness for membership. Patience seems prudent.
- 3) It is important that parents remember conversion is God's work in a person's life,¹⁰⁶ not simply a decision an individual

¹⁰⁴ Consider, for example, the fact that there is no air-tight example of childhood Christian baptism in Scripture. Every named baptism is that of an adult.

¹⁰⁵ An especially significant factor to consider is the relationship between parent and child, and parent and God. As one author states, "True conversion manifests itself over time. Children are childlike and trusting for a reason. To ask a pastor to try to separate out the tightly

knit strands of affection for parents and for God, and to discern which is primary in a child is to ask more than may be best for the child. Time allows the child's faith to mature and evidence itself consistently," see Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright eds., *Believers Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2006; 349-350.

¹⁰⁶ John 3:1-15, 6:44

makes. Therefore, parents should be vigilant in looking for many of the following signs of God's converting work in their child, over a period of time, before presenting him or her to the elders to discuss salvation and baptism:

Conviction of sin. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit, who uses God's laws and commands to bring sin and the necessity of trusting Christ home to the child's conscience.¹⁰⁷

Does your child demonstrate sorrow and remorse about her sin? Does he recognize that he has sinned against God and not just against others? Does she confess her sins to God and ask for his mercy without your prompting? Does he demonstrate commitment to Christ in the midst of strong temptation to disobey? Is she able to discern particular sins that she is often tempted by?

Understanding and Faith. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit by which he reveals the thoughts of God to people so that a person may obtain a true understanding of Christ and his Word.¹⁰⁸

Does your child understand that she is a sinner and cannot save herself? Does he grasp that his sins deserve death and punishment in hell? Does he understand that Jesus died as a substitute for his sins? Does she understand that she is saved only by God's grace and not because of any good within herself? Does your child demonstrate an understanding of the Scriptures when they are taught or is your child often confused or

disinterested? Does he show a desire to gather with and love God's people? Does he display an ability to learn from his teachers and in sermons? Does she actually participate in the corporate gatherings of the church?

New Life in Christ. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to a dead soul and produces an evident and credible profession of repentance and faith¹⁰⁹ as well as a new valuing of the Scriptures.¹¹⁰ Neither sorrow over sin nor interest in spiritual things alone is sufficient evidence of a regenerate heart or the work of the Spirit.¹¹¹

Does your child demonstrate a sustained interest in spiritual things? Does she pray, read, or sing the Scriptures on her own initiative? What sins has your child repented of? Does he desire to talk with you about God? How does your child demonstrate that he trusts the Lord? Does she demonstrate a genuine desire to tell others about Jesus?

We do not mean to imply that parents (or the church) should treat children with skepticism about their stated desire to follow Christ; instead, may we all rejoice over early evidences of grace and look for confirming fruit over time. If genuine conversion has occurred, it will become more and more clear. We believe this clarity best for the child, parents, and church. The above questions seek to guide parents as you teach the Scriptures, relate the gospel to all of life, talk with members who know your child, and pray for glorious evidences of the fruit of salvation.

- 4) Since a believer's baptism is inseparably connected to the believer's commitment to and inclusion in the visible people of God,

¹⁰⁷ 2 Kings 22, Romans 7:7-9

¹⁰⁸ John 10:26-27, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

¹⁰⁹ John 3, Romans 6, 10:9-10

¹¹⁰ John 6:45

¹¹¹ Acts 8:9-25, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Hebrews 12:17

baptism and church membership are to be addressed concurrently.¹¹² All branches of Christianity and every major denomination has historically understood this to be biblical and vital. Church on Mill's "Membership Statement of Faith" states the doctrine and connection this way:

We believe that Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible and communal actions which serve as signs of the immense goodness of God toward his people in that they place before our eyes the invisible actions God accomplished in salvation.¹¹³ Baptism is a one-time, symbolic act of obedience for every individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple.¹¹⁴ The Lord's Supper is a regular, symbolic act of obedience for all genuine followers of Christ.¹¹⁵ It symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly together throughout the Christian life as both a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death and demonstration of our unity with other members of Christ's body.¹¹⁶

Anyone who desires baptism must ordinarily¹¹⁷ be willing to join Church on Mill and reasonably prepared for church membership. A child is not ready for baptism until he is mature enough to enjoy, for example, the Lord's Supper, vote in Members Meetings, and be subject to church discipline, should an unwillingness to repent over significant sin become present in the future. While the age at which each child is ready to take on these serious responsibilities would vary, we

believe it prudent to wait until adolescence, when a child is learning to exercise more independent decision making, and take on more responsibility in many areas of life. He or she may then be ready to come under the accountability of Church on Mill members as a whole.

Perhaps an analogy would help at this point: A seven-year-old may express a sincere romantic love for a classmate and even a desire to marry. Perhaps those feelings are also shared by the other person. Parents wisely use this as an occasion to affirm the beauty of God's gendered design in creating men and women, how the gospel is put on display through marriage, and the goodness of longing for marriage, but parents do not also call a wedding coordinator to begin wedding planning. The child is simply too young. We believe it wise to think of baptism and membership in a similar way.

- 5) When a child begins to profess faith in Christ and inquire about baptism and church membership, the elders will joyfully join with that child's parents in considering God's work in their child's life. An elder will meet with the parents to discuss our policy and how we might support parents/children throughout this thrilling journey. If parents believe a meeting with the child, a parent, and an elder would encourage spiritual steps, we are happy to do that as well. Our Pastor of Family Ministries will also seek to stay in close contact to counsel parents as they pursue their children in spiritual things.

¹¹² The only biblical exceptions to this are in frontier mission contexts where no visible church yet exists.

¹¹³ Matthew 3:11, 28:19, John 1:33, 4:14, 6:51, 7:37–38, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 11:23–26, Ephesians 2:4–6, Philippians 3:20, Colossians 2:9–15, Titus 3:4–7, 1 Peter. 3:21–22

¹¹⁴ Matthew 28:18–20, Acts 2:37–41, 8:36–38, 10:44–48, 16:30–33, Romans 6:3–4

¹¹⁵ Acts 2:42, 20:7, 1 Corinthians 5:1–13, 10:14–21

¹¹⁶ Matthew 26:26–28, Mark 14:22–24, Luke 22:17–20, John 6:32–58, 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, 11:17–34, 12:13

¹¹⁷ We have, on rare occasions, made exceptions when a candidate for baptism is in a situation similar to a frontier missions context, such as an international student headed back overseas where no known church yet exists.

- 6) Over a period of time, the child will be led by his or her parents through a study that clarifies the gospel, baptism, the basic practices of a Christian's life, and the core doctrines of Christianity. Parents will be asked to use *Just for Starters* by Matthias Media¹¹⁸ and the Membership Statement of Faith to do so. A separate booklet "Preparing for Baptism and Church Membership," will be provided to parents to help guide them through this important discipleship process.¹¹⁹
- 7) At the conclusion of this study, if the child and parents still believe it is appropriate to proceed and the child is at least 13 years of age, the child will meet for an interview (or a series of interviews) with an elder. Although the parents may be a part of the initial interviews, a young person needs to be mature enough to be able to meet with an elder independently of his or her parents. The purpose of these meetings is to discern, as well as we can, if the child understands and has personally and genuinely embraced Jesus as Lord and Savior, and is ready to consider the responsibilities of membership.
- 8) If the parents and elders are in agreement that a child has given credible evidence of conversion and is ready to begin considering the privileges of membership, the child will be invited to attend an upcoming Membership Class and pursue membership independently. Parents are, of course, welcome to attend, but the child should be the one actively engaged.
- 9) Upon conclusion of the Membership Class, if the child, parents, and elders

jointly believe it is fitting for the child to proceed, the child will then be asked to do a Membership Interview with an elder independent of the parents, and, as every prospective member is asked, to give affirmation of Church on Mill's Membership Commitment, to write out her testimony and share it before the gathered church, to be baptized, and to subsequently be welcomed into the joys and privileges of membership by the members during the next regularly scheduled Members Meeting.

The elders are excited to engage with parents and children in these matters of spiritual significance! Regardless of the age of your child, we would love to provide support and encouragement along the way. If at any point parents or children have questions about this approach to baptism and membership, we would happily do all that we can to provide care. Please simply reach out.

For More Information

On the pages that follow, you will find a selection of *Questions and Answers* (pgs. 7-16), as well as a *For Additional Study* list for further reading (pg. 16).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly to your discipling of your children, please see the discipling companion to this paper entitled *Preparing for Baptism and Church Membership*.

¹¹⁸ If a parent has a similar but preferred book, we would request you touch base with an elder about potentially using that book instead.

¹¹⁹ Should a child not have parents who are Christians and members of Church on Mill, the process outlined

would be adjusted and, with the consent of his or her parents, a mentor would be assigned to help disciple the young person.

Questions and Answers

The following questions and answers are intended to provide additional information on the policy and procedures stated above. As your pastors, however, we desire to walk side by side with you through this process, so please initiate conversation any time. Perhaps you'll ask questions that should be added to future versions of this position paper!

- 1) *If my child is expressing faith in Christ, how can I best encourage this faith?*

First, this is an occasion to rejoice! Thank God for early signs of spiritual life. Second, there are many ways to encourage what you see God doing. These include, but certainly are not limited to, at least the following: Continue to teach your children God's law and commands, which the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction of sin.¹²⁰ Teach him God's promises, and speak plainly about the need to repent from sin and trust Christ.¹²¹ At the same time, model and teach honesty and openness with the Lord in prayer in the midst of all situations,¹²² and encourage your child to exercise disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and Bible memorization.¹²³ Also, be sure to include your child in both family and corporate worship. A person's presence and participation in the gathered church can be a catalyst for helping her grow to understand the gospel.¹²⁴

- 2) *If my child is not immediately baptized, does this imply my child is not a Christian?*

Certainly not! God converts people, sometimes quite young. The challenge lies with the church's ability to discern

that conversion with reasonable confidence. Your child may be a Christian—God knows. Yet he or she may simply be at present too young for the church to discern it clearly. Imagine a pastor or family ministries volunteer lovingly wondering, "Wait, is that the sound of a child's common-grace love and obedience I'm hearing, or the sound of saving-grace regeneration?" It is often not apparent in young children.

Our policy of not baptizing young children or recommending them for membership does not at all imply a decision that they are not saved: it is simply a judgment that at this point in their lives, we believe it prudent to wait for more discernible, credible evidence of regeneration before giving them the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of church membership. If your child is already secure in God's saving love, delaying baptism will not change that glorious reality, and more time may make it more publicly evident.

- 3) *Does delaying baptism encourage professing children to disobey biblical commands?*

Not necessarily. It is worth noticing the difference between negative prohibitions (like: "you shall not murder"¹²⁵ and "you shall not steal"¹²⁶) and positive injunctions (like: "remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities"¹²⁷ and "if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat"¹²⁸). You fulfill a negative prohibition by not doing the thing which is prohibited. It is very straightforward and easy to discern. Yet fulfilling a positive injunction depends

¹²⁰ Deuteronomy 6, Romans 3

¹²¹ Acts 2:38-39

¹²² Lamentations 2

¹²³ Psalm 119:9-11

¹²⁴ Psalm 8:2, 102:18, 1 Cor 14:24-25

¹²⁵ Exodus 20:13

¹²⁶ Exodus 20:15

¹²⁷ Titus 3:1

¹²⁸ 2 Thessalonians 3:10b

upon certain circumstances and conditions. For example, no one is expected to submit to the government if doing so would cause disobedience to God, nor are parents causing their child to sin by feeding him when he has no job to work for such food. The circumstances for obedience are simply not present.

The command to “be baptized” is a positive injunction. God expects Christians to fulfill it wisely, at the right time, and in the right way. For instance, God expects us to ensure that baptismal candidates clearly understand the gospel and have begun to bear the fruit of repentance. We can infer he would have us slow down when we are unsure. Likewise, we believe there is wisdom in saying “not yet” to children before their teenage years, just as there is wisdom in saying “not yet” to the instruction to work for food.

4) *Why use the age of 13 as a guide for beginning to practice baptism and membership?*

We do not claim that the Scriptures denote a certain age at which baptism and membership become prudent: God left this question to the category of wisdom. The fact that the Bible does not give an age suggests we must assess every profession of faith according to principles of God-dependent wisdom.

To be clear, all should be grateful anytime a child says, “I believe Jesus is my Lord and Savior.” Indeed, God saves children! That question is not up for grabs. The tougher question we are dealing with is, how capable are churches of discerning the credibility of a child’s profession of faith? After all, a child

might say “Jesus is Lord” by the power of the Holy Spirit and a born-again heart, or a child might say this to please mom and dad or to get the applause baptism receives. Frankly, it is difficult to discern the difference in young children. It does, however, become clearer as they age. Below are two reasons why.

First, Jesus admonishes people to count the cost of following him.¹²⁹ It “costs” most young children little, if anything, to follow Christ; however, an adolescent will undoubtedly encounter a measure of cost. A willingness to choose Christ when costs begin to emerge can provide great confidence in the presence of credible, saving faith. This does not merit salvation, but it may reveal its presence.

Second, God has provided the home as the primary context of authority in a child’s life. As a child gets older, however, that authority is slowly supplemented by others. To be baptized and join the membership of a church includes coming under the church’s authority, insofar as that church obeys Christ. We believe it wise for this entrustment to happen as children are naturally experiencing it in other spheres of adolescence.

Finally, we have tried for years to avoid denoting a specific age. We taught this approach to baptism yet refrained from suggesting an age threshold, and it sometimes appeared to sow confusion in what is already a complex matter. We are sorry! We hope designating a specific age provides more clarity on what seems prudent to us.

¹²⁹ See Luke 14:26-33 for one example of many such passages

- 5) *Would it be better to wait until children have moved out of their parents' house or are at least into their late teens?*

While some churches take this approach and society wisely reserves certain responsibilities for ages beyond 13, we think many believing children are ready by their early teenage years. As parents, you may, of course, wait if you feel that is best.

A credible profession includes discernible evidence. Another word the Bible uses for "evidence" is "fruit." You can tell a tree by its fruit.¹³⁰ There is nothing magical about children moving out of their parents' houses. The light is not suddenly switched on for members of a local church to see the fruit (or lack thereof) of a candidate for membership. Rather, over time, including the time before an individual leaves home, a parent's authority over aspects of a child's life gradually decreases. For example, a 2-year-old cannot put on his own clothes, but a 5-year-old can. On all levels, physically, mentally, and emotionally, a 13-year-old is more independent from his parents than a 5-year-old. If dependency decreases gradually over time, it makes sense to us that once fruit is present, independent decision-making is emerging, and the responsibilities of membership are appropriate, it is time to be baptized. Although baptism is a personal and corporate decision, not a familial one, we believe this is appropriate for a teenager still under his or her parent's roof.

It would be mistaken, nonetheless, to view 13 as the age we expect most children in the church to reach and then suddenly pursue baptism, like many teenagers do when they reach the legal age for driving. There is nothing automatic about the age of 13. Instead, we offer that age as a threshold for when we, as elders, will generally be more inclined to have these conversations in earnest. Maybe a conversation with a particular youth will last for a few months. Perhaps it will last for a few years. Possibly it will resolve inconclusively about membership, for a time, while we continue in our commitment to disciple youth. Maybe it will go very quickly. Our collective sense is that people in their early to mid-teens begin to establish a kind of mental, emotional, and intellectual independence from their parents, making it easier to discern a credible profession of faith and readiness for membership.

- 6) *How are baptism and church membership related?*

This is a crucial and sometimes misunderstood element of discussions regarding baptism. Central to the connection between baptism and membership is the recognition that baptism is not solely an individual's public proclamation of their own personal faith in Jesus. It is never less, but it is certainly more. Individuals do not baptize themselves based on their confidence in their profession. No, baptism is also a church's public proclamation that, as far as God's people can presently tell, the individual truly is a regenerated follower of Christ.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Matthew 7:15-20

¹³¹ Theologically speaking, Christians have long recognized that the membership of the invisible church

Baptism formally affirms an individual's union with Christ and Christ's body, the Church. It distinguishes people as citizens of Christ's kingdom. Jesus means this when he commissions the disciples to baptize people "into the name" of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹³² What is crucial to recognize is that both church membership and the Lord's Supper do the same thing. They formally affirm someone's union with Christ and his body. They distinguish Christ's people from the world.

Think of it this way – if baptism is the public entry into the life of the church, the Lord's Supper is the ongoing family meal for a church's members. As the Apostle Paul states, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."¹³³ Enjoying the one bread, in other words, reveals who belongs to the one body. The Supper is a church revealer. Baptism begins church life, and the Lord's Supper marks off this life in an ongoing way. These ordinances are the signs of church membership. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church membership belong together; they are a package deal.¹³⁴ These, along

with the preaching of God's Word, make a church *a church*.

Exceptions exist, as with the Ethiopian eunuch, since Christianity pushes into new frontier missionary territory where local churches do not yet exist.¹³⁵ Yet ordinarily, churches baptize people into membership,¹³⁶ and the Lord's Supper is a privilege of church members, whether one's own church or when visiting another.

7) *Will my child's faith be put in danger by the congregation not immediately affirming it?*

From beginning to end, salvation is a gift from God. As the Scriptures say, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."¹³⁷ Remember, God does not retract this precious gift! If God has saved your child, you need not fear a delay of baptism will put his or her faith in peril. Foster a God-centered view of salvation and encourage the same in your child. You might even consider memorizing the last two verses of Jude, which state, "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be

[cont.] (all those who are saved by Jesus) and the membership of the visible church (local churches) will unfortunately not be identical. Nevertheless, Church on Mill strives to do her best in only receiving true Christians as members. That is, we aim for a regenerate membership by (a) carefully looking for credible professions of faith from everyone seeking to join, no matter their age, and (b) lovingly practicing church discipline.

¹³² Matthew 28:19

¹³³ 1 Corinthians 10:17

¹³⁴ Church discipline comes into play here as well. In Scripture, church membership and discipline are the two sides of one coin (See 1 Corinthians 5:2, 12,

2 Corinthians 2:6). If membership involves affirming a person's profession of faith, discipline involves removing that affirmation. The one should not be practiced without the possibility of the other. This is not a punitive matter, but the administration of God's love for the life and growth of the people of God (Hebrews 12:3-6).

¹³⁵ Acts 8:26-40

¹³⁶ As Luke plainly says, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

¹³⁷ Ephesians 2:8

glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever.

Amen.¹³⁸

It is hypothetically possible that delaying baptism from a genuine Christian child could sometimes be discouraging. Yet keep three things in mind:

First, the child can flourish under other means of grace. He or she can still read and study the Word, sit under its preaching, pray, sing, and grow in the company of other Christians.

Second, the Bible—Old and New Testaments—focuses on children’s obedience to their parents. The home is a crucial, perhaps even the most critical, means of grace in young children’s lives. See your spiritual labors in the home as primary. Seek gospel fluency in nurturing and growing your child’s faith. This will go a long way in protecting your child from discouragement and fostering spiritual habits that may last for a lifetime!

Third, we believe it would be more discouraging to a child to seek baptism and find he is not yet ready for it than to simply wait until a believing child is a bit older. Let the flower of faith bloom a bit before you encourage your child to request baptism. She will remember it as her own and be better equipped to give a credible profession as she begins and continues in adolescence.

8) *Can my unbaptized child still be disciplined by the church?*

Absolutely. Church on Mill is deeply committed to discipling children of all ages, teaching them God’s Word, and seeking to point them to Jesus Christ. A wealth of help is available to you as a parent in teaching your child, however young, to be a follower of Jesus. In fact,

we make this very pledge in our church “Membership Statement of Fellowship:”

We will aim to bring up all who are in our care and through example, word, and deed seek the salvation of our friends, family, community, and all the nations.

9) *If my child has made a profession of faith but has not been baptized, should he or she participate in the Lord’s Supper?*

Baptism is the entry sign of the New Covenant, and the Lord’s Supper is the continuing sign. Therefore, please do not allow your child to participate in the Lord’s Supper until he or she is baptized and becomes a church member.

Use the church’s practice of the Lord’s Supper to encourage active, God-glorifying anticipation in your child’s heart. Instead of only focusing on why your child should not partake, encourage him or her to reflect on what the Supper signifies—Christ’s body broken for sinners and his uniting of them together. If you can do so truthfully, let your child know how you have seen the Lord’s work in her life. Encourage them to continue trusting Christ. Point them to Christ and assure them of your confidence that since he has begun a good work in them, he will finish it.

Explain its significance if your children are with you during the Lord’s Supper. Share with them how much the Lord loved us to give his life for us. Pray with them, thanking the Lord for his death and resurrection, and set an example of worthy partaking.

¹³⁸ Jude 24–25

10) *Why not create tiers of membership? In other words, why not baptize believing children, affirm them into “junior membership,” and withhold doctrinal expectations, the possibility of church discipline, voting, and the like?*

Biblically speaking, the functions of membership cannot be separated from its form. In other words, God designates what church membership entails – churches do not have the freedom to adjust it into something else. Although some well-meaning churches do so by lowering expectations, establishing voting and serving ages, and so on, we believe the best way to train young people to see themselves as whole parts of the membership of the body is to treat them as such when they are emerging into readiness for both the form (membership) and its functions (responsibilities). Through careful discipleship, teaching, and example setting, young people will gain an appreciation for what full engagement in the life of the church family entails. This will, Lord willing, prepare them well to leave home with a readiness to be healthy church members for the rest of their lives wherever God takes them.

11) *If I believe my child is a Christian, shouldn’t that be enough?*

Of course, a parent’s testimony carries considerable weight, for a parent will know their child in ways no other member does. However, Christ gives the congregation particular responsibility here. As we teach in the Membership Class, because the Bible itself teaches it,

God has given the keys of the kingdom to the church.¹³⁹ Baptism and membership are, therefore, never a matter of just one or two people (even family members) vouching for a person. They are a matter of the entire church, through its elders first and members second, determining that a person has made a credible profession of faith and has indeed expressed readiness for the responsibilities of membership.

12) *Are the risks really that great in baptizing young children?*

There are at least two potential and significant dangers in baptizing children before they have reached an appropriate degree of readiness.

First, early baptism has the potential of offering a child false assurance, leading him to rely on the experience of baptism and the reality of church membership for a sense of salvation. Of course, false assurance is a danger for anyone of any age, but it would seem to be a particular danger for children whose thinking tends toward the concrete and whose sense of well-being is naturally and tightly woven together with a sense of others’—especially parental—approval. As they emerge into adolescence, however, children can better know for themselves (and the church is far better able to see) that their faith is truly and solely in Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is of enormous benefit to the child, parent, and church.

Second, as most of us can attest, a large percentage of people who are baptized relatively young are troubled by spiritual confusion and doubts later in life

¹³⁹ See Matthew 16:19, 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5:4-11, 2 Corinthians 2:6; if this is a new theological concept, you may also benefit from reading the excellent booklet

Understanding Baptism by Bobby Jamieson, Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.

about the genuineness of their baptism. Many come to believe they were not, in fact, genuinely saved when they were baptized.¹⁴⁰ Memories of the first decade of our lives are often fuzzy at best. Even if we remember a decision or an event like baptism, we usually cannot recall any reasoning behind it. Once a child has the capacity for more reasoning and independent thinking, she is far more likely to embrace the decisions and commitments she makes as her own.¹⁴¹ We hope that as a child waits, there will be a growing sense of anticipation as she looks forward to following the Lord in obedience. By encouraging parents to wait a while before presenting their young children for baptism and membership, we hope to help people lessen the dangers of both false assurance and confusion.

Baptists and others have always believed that churches should only baptize people when they profess evident faith. We should not baptize infants or those whose professions are not yet reasonably credible. That distinctive is a core tenant of what makes us Baptists.¹⁴² In recent decades, however, it is true that

Baptists have disagreed over the appropriate age to begin baptizing, yet that has not always been the case. Historically, most Baptists have believed that a credible profession of faith requires a degree of maturity. Delaying baptism until a person reaches his or her late teens or early twenties has been common throughout Baptist history. Yes, exceptions occurred, but the norm is without question. The modern practice of many Southern Baptist churches baptizing young children is an anomaly – despite it being the only practice some of the members of Church on Mill know.¹⁴³ We are humbly convinced that the recovery of this general approach is essential.

13) Does the elders' practice imply my baptism as a young child was illegitimate?

Absolutely not! Numerous members of Church on Mill were baptized early in life. We do not mean to call those early baptisms into question. In fact, in those cases, the intervening years of spiritual growth and faithfulness have shown those early baptisms to be legitimate. Praise God for saving and keeping you!

¹⁴⁰ As your pastors, some of us have this as our personal testimony, and all of us have done multiple membership interviews for Church on Mill in which this was the case with the interviewee. Sadly, this is far from unusual; in fact, one study found that "...60 percent of all baptisms were, in fact, rebaptism. Of these, one in three had previously experienced believer's baptism in a Southern Baptist church," see Tony Hemphill, "The Practice of Infantile Baptism in Southern Baptist Churches and Subsequent Impact on Regenerate Church Membership," *Faith & Mission*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Summer 2001); 84.

¹⁴¹ Consider how King Solomon indicates folly is in the heart of a child (Proverbs 22:15a) and the Apostle Paul spoke of himself in this way, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish

ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11) and compares people unduly tossed about doctrinally to children (Ephesians 4:14).

¹⁴² That is – baptistic in our theological convictions

¹⁴³ One historian notes helpfully, "Historically, Baptists were slow to see childhood decisions as credible professions warranting baptism. Things began to change in the twentieth century. By 1966, baptisms of those eight years of age and younger amounted to ten percent of all baptisms in Southern Baptist churches, and baptisms of those six and younger increased by 250 percent in the years between 1977 and 1997. I have both theological and pastoral concerns over these trends," John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*, 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019; 312.

We have adopted our approach to baptism, nevertheless, because for every member who was baptized early and proved that baptism to be genuine over the years, there are more who were baptized early but who eventually decided their baptism was not a true one — that they were not really a Christian at the time of their early baptism. Still, others testify they were lulled to sleep for a time by false assurance extended through baptism and membership. And that is to say nothing of the droves baptized as children in churches across the United States who show no evidence of conversion as adults. Through this policy, we want to avoid these troubles as much as possible.

14) *What if my child was baptized at another church before coming to Church on Mill?*

By asking parents to wait until their professing children enter adolescence before encouraging them to pursue baptism, we do not mean to claim that a genuine baptism cannot occur before that time. If a child was baptized as a believer at another church before coming to Church on Mill, we will, of course, not ask the child to be baptized again. A genuine baptism is a one-time event.

All that we have said about trying to discern a credible profession of faith with regard to baptism is also true concerning church membership. Therefore, we strongly recommend that parents not present their baptized children for membership at Church on Mill until age 13. We are willing to do a membership interview for your younger child if you and the child insist and believe a readiness for the responsibilities therein is present, but please know that we would not ordinarily expect such a

conversation to be fruitful in determining the credibility of a child's profession until at least age 13.

This aspect of the topic, to be sure, is difficult, especially for those who have been members of churches with different perspectives on baptism, membership, and young children. On the one side, the consciences of the child, the parents, and the former congregation say one thing. On the other side, the consciences of us as your new elders and the need for unity in the new congregation say another thing. If you have questions, please be sure to talk with an elder. As much as is possible, we want to ensure your child is encouraged in her faith in Jesus, regardless of whether she seeks membership as a young child.

15) *What if I do not agree with this approach?*

When all is said and done, we do not assume every member will entirely agree with every other member (or elder) on the best time to begin baptizing believing children or if we should baptize children at all. Indeed, your pastors have spent considerable time working through our own differing instincts and learning from each other's experiences. By God's grace, we have labored to defer to and honor one another to find common ground and best practices. That ground is articulated in this document. We likewise invite every member to join us on that common ground for the sake of unity and love, even if it involves some measure of deference and patience on your part.

At this point, we are convinced this approach to baptism and membership is likely, by God's grace, to foster the

greatest good for the greatest number of people. We understand this is a sensitive topic, so if you struggle with our assessment, please reach out. We do not want to discourage your children if they are genuine believers, but we do not want the church to give them false assurance if they are not. We are concerned about the risks of baptizing too quickly as well as the risks of waiting too long. We hope, in the end, this approach takes the prudent middle road.

16) *I serve in Family Ministries and/or actively aim to encourage other church members' children. How should I support a child who expresses faith in Christ without overstepping or pressuring the child?*

Church on Mill is filled with these kinds of people. We praise God for this! Here are several suggestions:

- (a) Stress the character of God and the facts of the gospel. Teach children God's laws and commands, which the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction of sin (Deuteronomy 6). Then, teach them God's promises and plainly speak about their need to repent from sin and trust Christ. When children express an affirmation of these truths, tell them how glad you are.
- (b) Do not be skeptical about a child's sincerity. Although we want to be careful not to give a child a false sense of security, neither do we wish to unwittingly discourage children from believing that God can grant them saving faith as a child. When a child says he or she loves Jesus or

believes in Jesus, responses such as, "That's wonderful! I'm so glad to hear it! I hope and pray you'll love and follow him your whole life!" can be incredibly encouraging. If you have such a conversation, be sure to pass along the good news to the child's parents, as this will help them shepherd their child's heart well.

- (c) Refrain from offering assurances or pressuring young children for commitments. It is important not to assure children that a prayer for mercy ("sinner's prayer") guarantees their eternal destiny. It does not. Salvation is the work of God. Majoring on the prayer prayed rather than the God who saves is the wrong point of emphasis; instead, encourage children to take on a lifestyle of faith and repentance.
- (d) Trust God to work in the hearts of his children to bring them to himself through faith, in his time, and in his ways. Your responsibility is to faithfully tell the gospel to them and leave the results to the Lord. God will complete what he begins!¹⁴⁴ We can trust that the Holy Spirit will assure those who are truly changed.¹⁴⁵

17) *Given this policy related to children, should we hold adults to a "higher standard" too?*

While the sentiment expressed in this question is admirable, we aspire to hold every individual seeking baptism and membership to the same biblical criteria. Such expectations have been applied to adults seeking baptism for many years of

¹⁴⁴ Philippians 1:6

¹⁴⁵ Romans 8:16

Church on Mill's history. We long to see the same applied uniformly to young people as well.

18) *What should I say to my child if he or she wants to be baptized but is too young?*

The short answer is, encourage your child for his or her desire and explain that sometimes God has us wait for the right season for fulfilling his purposes, including joining a church. Perhaps you can say something like this: "Sweetheart, I'm so encouraged you want to be baptized, and when the right time comes, I hope you will be. Sometimes the Lord has us wait to do the very things he commands—such as his command in 2 Thessalonians 3 about not eating if you do not work—so that we can be prepared for everything such a command requires. Right now, I want you to continue learning and growing in the knowledge of the Lord so that when the time comes, you'll be ready to help other church members follow Jesus, even as they help you follow him. In the meantime, our own family will help you do that, and other friends of ours and yours in the church can help, too."

Instead of focusing primarily on "no" or "not yet," especially if your child raises the issue repeatedly, outline a plan of next steps in discipleship that you would like to take with him or her. Show her that she is not simply waiting: she is being taught and growing up in the faith. The elders would be delighted to help any parent, regardless of their child's age, develop a robust, personalized plan for moving forward with intentionality. These can be among the most precious memories you will ever build with your children.

For Additional Study

In addition to the Bible itself, the following resources may aid those who wish to devote themselves to more intensive study on this topic.

Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding Baptism*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.

Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

Dennis Gundersen, *Your Child's Profession of Faith*. Sand Springs: Grace and Truth Books, 2010.

John S. Hammett, *40 Questions About Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2015.

John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology, 2nd Edition*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2019.

Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright eds., *Believers Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.

Appendix 5

Our Affiliation

I. Church Affiliations

Church on Mill is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Every church affiliated with the SBC is an independent, autonomous local church. This relationship allows us to voluntarily partner with the SBC in chosen ministry areas. Being baptistic in theology we gladly affirm not less than the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

The most important benefit of being associated with the SBC is the opportunity to contribute to the Cooperative Program which funds mission work both in America and around the world. The International Mission Board, the SBC's international missions agency, is one of the largest in the world. A portion of every dollar given at Church on Mill goes to support missions locally, regionally, and globally (<http://www.imb.org>).

We also work in close cooperation with the Arizona Chapter of The Gospel Coalition (<http://arizona.thegospelcoalition.org> and <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org>), 9Marks (<http://www.9marks.org>), the Charles Simeon Trust (<https://simeontrust.org>), and the Grove Church Planting Network of Arizona.

II. Global Partnerships

Church on Mill is active in disciple-making both locally and globally. Our international missions partnerships include missionaries in:

- **Scotland** (The McConnell Family | Niddrie Community Church | www.20schemes.com)
- **Italy** (The Krause Family | Serenissima Bible Church | sbible.smgroupp.info)
- **Thailand** (The Hoshiwara Family | <https://omf.org/us/>)

Appendix 6

The Trellis and the Vine

“Thus the goal of Christian ministry is quite simple, and in a sense measurable: are we making and nurturing genuine disciples of Christ? The church always tends towards institutionalism and secularization. The focus shifts to preserving traditional programs and structures, and the goal of discipleship is lost. The mandate of disciple-making provides the touchstone for whether our church is engaging in Christ’s mission. Are we making genuine disciples of Jesus Christ?”
(The Trellis and the Vine, 14)

Every true church exists to glorify God by making disciples who make disciples. Here at Church on Mill, we express that purpose as “glorifying God by lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The aim of this article is to explain how we approach that great task of multiplying disciples.

A book called The Trellis and the Vine, quoted above, is immensely helpful in guiding us to understand why Church on Mill does ministry in the manner that we do. In the book, the trellis and the vine are a metaphor for the church. The trellis consists of the supporting structures of the church like organized programs and classes, budgets, administrative work, and anything that involves systems and planning. The vine is the people growth, whether that be people engaging in discipleship, evangelism, or just reading the Bible with someone else. In short, this people-work can be called disciple-making, and it is our charge as a church, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The authors of the book make the point that often church leaders believe (intentionally or unintentionally) that putting loads of work into a trellis is the way to a healthier vine—that is, if we only make sure our structures are vast and ever-expanding, we will be able to grow a healthy body of people. And, to a certain degree, this philosophy seems successful. A large group of people may flock to a church that seems to have everything. However, the trellis of the church can easily become the sole focus of the church. The trellis exists for the vine, while the converse is not true.

This brings us to a question: what does the trellis look like at Church on Mill? You have probably already noticed. We have less programs and activities than you might expect, and the ones we do have may seem a bit strange before the intention behind them is known. Perhaps the trellis here doesn’t look flashy at all. We gather Sundays to sing, sit under God’s word, and pray. We scatter throughout the week to live shared lives on the mission of making disciples. We get trained on Wednesdays. We take our church membership seriously. That’s basically it.

A better question may be this: is the trellis fulfilling its purpose? If a trellis’ one goal in life is to support a healthy, vibrant vine, then every structure our church employs must be in place only to support a healthy, vibrant, and growing church body. We need Wednesday night classes only if they teach us how to make disciples, Connection Classes only if they teach us how to know our Lord and each other better, and special events only if they are equipping us to go and love God, his Word, one another, and the world in more visible and impactful ways. All structures that do not grow our disciple-making, whether they are rooted in tradition or trendy technique, are a waste of time.

Though they look beautiful on paper, they look purposeless and lifeless in the eyes of the Lord, who is the creator and head of our church.

If the true measure of growth is in how the vine looks, it is also pertinent that we, the church, are vigilant in watching our vine and in evaluating if our simple trellis is effective in its work. Are our members' love for one another growing? Are more and more people knocking on our doors or ringing our phones? Are we seeking to invite a work friend to a game night with church members? Is compassion building in our hearts for the homeless, disabled, and abused? Do we find less joy in the things of this world and more joy in knowing Jesus personally? The more time we spend consuming formal church events, the less time we are able to engage in this Christ-exalting work.

By God's grace, our vine is vibrant with disciple-making. We love the opportunity to come alongside people in their walks with Christ, whether they are still standing at the starting line or have walked for years and years. We pray that we may continually glorify God in loving not our own programs, but his people. This is a culture of disciple-making. Won't you join in?

Note: For more in-depth study of this topic, read [The Trellis and the Vine](#) by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne.

Appendix 7

Fellow College Students, Please Join a Local Church

What would you do if you saw a nose strutting down the street? You'd cry out, "Why are you not joined to a body?"

We should have the same reaction to Christian college students who are not joined to a local church.

In my early years of college, I lived like a detached nose. But when I learned the importance of church membership and joined a local congregation, I finally found where I belonged. I tasted the security of having pastors shepherd me and feed me God's Word. I gained wisdom as older, faithful women disciplined me. I felt the pleasure of serving others with my gifts and resources. Most of all, I was humbled by the truth that the church is the bride for whom Christ shed his blood.

How could I claim to love Christ while neglecting his treasured bride?

To my fellow college students, here are four biblical reasons you should join a local church where you're currently living.

1. To be watched over by church leaders.

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account" (Heb. 13:17).

College is a prime time to mature spiritually, but we cannot properly grow if we do not submit to church leaders who feed, shepherd, and protect us.

Many college students excuse themselves from church membership, believing the local church can be replaced by a parachurch ministry. However, a campus ministry (or a Christian university, for that matter) is not equivalent to the local church because God has not given it the same authority. Church leaders possess a special authority that involves guarding, guiding, and giving an account for souls. By not joining a church, we disregard God's wise plan for us.

2. To be disciplined by older church members.

"Older women likewise are . . . to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled" (Titus 2:3–5).

My favorite memories of college life so far include sipping boba tea and chatting with older church members about marriage and family. There are few contexts for students to develop relationships with people in a different life stage. College is a formative and transitional season where we learn how to be adults. Trying to figure out adult life by only talking to other 20-year-olds will leave us unprepared for life and ministry. We need the advice and wisdom of older church members to help us learn and grow as we walk down paths they've already traveled.

Trying to figure out adult life by only talking to other 20-year-olds will leave us unprepared for life and ministry.

3. To build up the church.

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11–13).

College students have gifts and abilities that are uniquely suited to serve a local church. As the younger members of a congregation, we are energetic and innovative. We have artistic, athletic, and musical talents. We make good Ramen! We have a unique platform for evangelism, since we interact regularly with non-Christian students. We can find countless ways to contribute to the life of the church and build up the body of Christ.

4. To learn to love those Jesus loved.

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).

Some students shy away from pursuing church membership because they can’t find a church that meets their needs and wants. This consumer mindset is foreign to the Bible. Scripture teaches that the church is a group of people we prioritize and commit to. Instead of only looking for a church that meets our needs, we ought to look for a group of people we envision giving our lives for, just as Christ gave his life for the church.

God is glorified when the power of the gospel unites people who have little in common.

Part of this commitment involves giving ourselves to people we aren’t naturally inclined to know. It’s a beautiful glimpse of heaven when an 80-year-old Costa Rican grandmother and a 23-year-old Chinese-American student sit in the same pew, sing the same songs, pray for one another, and eat around the same table. God is glorified when the power of the gospel unites people who have little in common.

These are just four of many reasons to join a local church in college. May the Lord grant you a fresh love for his bride—both for your good and also for his glory.

What a profound kingdom impact there would be if more college students were committed to serving, loving, and treasuring the bride of Christ.

Lee, Caroline. “Fellow College Students, Please Join a Local Church”.
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fellow-college-students-please-join-local-church>, Accessed 15 September 2017.

Appendix 8

Baptism

Why Baptism?

In accepting Christ as both Savior and King, you died to your sin and were raised with Christ into a new life! Praise God that you are now alive in him.

As our Membership Statement of Faith says, “We believe that Christian baptism is a symbolic act of obedience modeled by Jesus Himself and is commanded for every individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ’s atoning work and become His disciple.”

With Christ as our saving king, in joy we strive to be obedient in all he asks of us. Jesus Christ was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17) and commanded us to baptize as well (Matthew 28:19), instituting baptism as the first step of obedience for every disciple. In baptism, we publically identify ourselves with Christ and his people in a specific local church (Acts 2:37-41).

Baptism also encourages us to walk in the newness of life we are given when we become Christians. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

Suggestions on How to Prepare Your Heart to Write and Share Your Testimony

Read Acts 22:3-21. This is Paul’s testimony of how Jesus changed him. Who was Paul before he was converted? What did he value over God? Who were you? What did you value over God? How did Jesus grab hold of Paul and show him mercy and grace? How did Jesus grab hold of you and show you mercy and grace?

Pray about nonbelieving and believing family and friends you can invite to your baptism. Pray that they would repent and be baptized if they don’t believe. Pray that they would be encouraged and spurred on in their faith if they do. Pray that the words you say are faithful to show them the gospel.

Pray that your heart in baptism would be to glorify God alone.

Writing Your Testimony

When writing your testimony, your goal is to write one page that summarizes how God brought you from death to life through the transforming work of his gospel. This means there will be three main components to share in your testimony, listed below. You do not have to answer every question in italics below; rather, they are meant to help you think through your testimony. Writing out answers to the questions or sharing with someone else out loud can be a wonderful way to get started and help you summarize the amazing work God has done to transform you.

1. Who you were before Christ saved you
Think: How were you trapped in your sin? What did your life look and feel like? Who were you? Who did you believe God was?
2. How you came to know Christ through God's transforming work
Think: Who did God use to speak into your life? What experiences did he use? How did he teach you about who he was? Why did you finally accept the gospel as truth?
3. Who you are now that you are alive in Christ
Think: What are you now learning as you walk with Christ? How are you seeing God's transforming power over your heart or mind? How are you learning more truth about who God is?

Next Steps

- Email your testimony to Chuck (chuck@churchonmill.org) or Tad (tad@churchonmill.org). Be prepared for feedback that helps you better show the gospel in your life and makes your story clearer.
- If you haven't already, discuss a date to be baptized with Chuck or Tad.
- Practice reading your testimony until it feels comfortable. Practice reading clearly, loudly, and slowly. Read it out loud to others.
- Discuss with the person baptizing you:
 - Which service you will be baptized in
 - What time you should head to the back
 - Where you'll go to get to the baptismal
 - What will actually happen when you are in the water
 - Who you might like to have with you in the back to pray with and assist you

Day of the Baptism

- Wear dark clothing and a swimsuit underneath.
- Bring a paper copy of your testimony and a change of clothes (towels provided).
- Connect with the person baptizing you to say hi and ask any last minute questions.
- Speak as closely to the microphone as possible without touching it.
- Hold your testimony down and to the side so that your face can be seen.

What's Next?

God has done a marvelous thing in your life. We are praying for you and celebrating with you as you publicly proclaim the work of our great God.

If you have not already been announced as a candidate for membership at Church on Mill, you will be announced on the day of your baptism. At the next Members Meeting, the elders will present you to the members of Church on Mill for a vote of affirmation. Once you are affirmed by church members during the meeting, you will be a member of Church on Mill.

Appendix 9

Quote Attribution

Page 5, “God will have a community who knows him and praises him as God. This is the big picture of the Bible.”

Mark Dever, Understanding the Great Commission. Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2016; 10.

Page 10, “Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us.”

John R.W. Stott, The Cross of Christ. Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1986; 59-60.

Page 17, “A local church is a group of Christians who regularly gather in Christ’s name to officially affirm and oversee one another’s membership in Jesus Christ and his kingdom through gospel preaching and gospel ordinances.”

Jonathan Leeman, Church Membership. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012; 62-63

Page 23, “Sound doctrine is essential equipment for navigating the twisting city streets of our lives. So don’t leave home without it.”

Bobby Jamieson, Sound Doctrine. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013; 21.

Page 27, “The lives of Christians together display visibly the gospel they proclaim audibly.”

Mark Dever, The Church. Nashville, B&H Publishing, 2012; 40.

Appendix 10

Application for Church Membership

We are thrilled you are interested in becoming a part of the Church on Mill family! Please complete this application and return it to the church office. A member of the Elder Team will contact you to schedule a Membership Interview.

Today's date _____

Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) _____ Birthdate _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Male or Female (circle one)

Single or Married (circle one)

Cell Phone _____ Work phone _____

Email _____

How would you prefer we contact you? _____

For Completion by Elder

Date of Membership Interview: _____

Interviewed by: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____

Applicant has affirmed the Membership Commitment: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Applicant needs to be baptized: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Areas of Planned Follow-up: _____

Return completed Membership Application to the Church Office

