

# Pepperell Christian Fellowship Membership Commitment

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## Why we have church membership at PCF

The Christian life is an incredible adventure. It is full of ups and downs, joys and sorrows, successes and failures. Church membership expresses our desire to live this adventure together with other Christian brothers and sisters as part of a loving, welcoming, Jesus-centered community. It also expresses our desire to say to more and more people, ‘Come join us on this adventure!’

Being a Jesus-centered community is an awesome privilege and a demanding commitment. By entering into a membership community with one another, we are pursuing both the joy and the sacrifice of being involved in each other’s lives. We do this for the sake of our own souls and also because we believe that the more deeply we love each other the more we will advance our mission of displaying the worth of God to the world.<sup>1</sup> We don’t believe true membership tidies things up – on the contrary, it makes things messier as we really invest in each other’s lives. But that’s the kind of messiness the Bible urges us to enter into with each other.

Church membership is our effort to honor and live out four truths about the church taught in the New Testament. First, the New Testament affirms that a local church is a defined body of believers.<sup>2</sup> Second, the New Testament affirms that Christians should be deeply involved in each other’s lives for mutual encouragement and exhortation.<sup>3</sup> Third, the New Testament affirms that the leaders of a local church are accountable to God to shepherd well the people in their care, and that those within the church should submit to their leaders as those leaders submit to God and obey his will.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the New Testament affirms that local churches should make important decisions together as a church.<sup>5</sup>

At PCF, we are seeking to live ‘from the gospel and for the gospel.’ That means the foundation for our lives of Christian obedience is God’s free grace shown us at the cross of Jesus, who died as our substitute and bore God’s judgment for our sin. We don’t obey Jesus in order to earn God’s favor, because God has *already* forgiven us at the cross! Instead, we obey Jesus in order to promote the spread of the gospel and the glory of God. This is the spirit in which we approach the significant promises we make to one another in this Membership Commitment. Because we’re sinners, we don’t pretend we’ll always perfectly fulfill these promises, but nonetheless we make these promises with hope, because we are *forgiven, justified* sinners now filled with God’s Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> John 13.35

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18.15-20; 1 Corinthians 5.1-13

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 3.13; 1 John 3.16

<sup>4</sup> Acts 20.28; Hebrews 13.17; 1 Peter 5.1-4

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 18.17; 2 Corinthians 2.6-7

## Statement of faith, doctrine, and mission

We ask all members of PCF to affirm the following:

- I have been led by God to repent of my sin and trust in Jesus Christ alone as my Savior and Lord, and have been baptized as a profession of my faith.
- I am in full agreement with the PCF statement of faith.
- I gladly commit to furthering the mission of PCF: ‘We exist to be a Jesus-centered community in Pepperell, speaking gospel words and doing gospel works to display the worth of God to the world.’

In the presence of God and relying on his help, I solemnly and joyfully enter into this membership commitment with the other members of PCF as one body in Christ.

## The commitments of the PCF membership community to me

PCF commits to appoint Elders who meet the biblical qualifications of the office.<sup>6</sup> PCF Elders will be men who joyfully shepherd, nurture, and watch over the souls of all the members of PCF as under-shepherds of Christ<sup>7</sup> while setting an example in life and godliness.<sup>8</sup> They will teach the Bible and sound doctrine and guard against doctrinal error.<sup>9</sup> On the last day, at the return of Christ, the Elders of PCF will give an account to Jesus himself for the way they have cared for the souls of those under their charge.<sup>10</sup>

PCF commits to appoint Deacons who meet the biblical qualifications of the office.<sup>11</sup> PCF Deacons will be men and women who are ‘of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.’<sup>12</sup> They will seek to meet the practical and material needs of PCF<sup>13</sup> and will serve as examples of glad-hearted, sacrificial service for the rest of the PCF members, *all* of whom are called to serve one another as Christ served us.<sup>14</sup>

The PCF membership community commits to be a body of believers where each one of us cares for the others. We recognize that we cannot know every PCF member with the same level of intimacy. Nonetheless, in ways appropriate to our individual relationships within the membership community, we will love one another<sup>15</sup>, admonish one another<sup>16</sup>, encourage one another<sup>17</sup>, and pray for one another.<sup>18</sup> We will weep when others weep and

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 3.1-7; Titus 1.5-9

<sup>7</sup> Acts 20.28; Hebrews 13.17

<sup>8</sup> 1 Timothy 4.15-16; 1 Peter 5.1-3

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 5.17; Titus 1.9

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 13.17; James 3.1; 1 Peter 5.4

<sup>11</sup> 1 Timothy 3.8-13

<sup>12</sup> Acts 6.3

<sup>13</sup> Cp. Acts 6.1-6 and 1 Timothy 3.8-13

<sup>14</sup> Mark 10.43-45

<sup>15</sup> John 13.34-35; 15.12; Romans 13.8; 1 Thessalonians 4.9; 1 John 3.11

<sup>16</sup> Romans 15.14; 1 Thessalonians 5.14; 2 Thessalonians 3.15

<sup>17</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5.11; Hebrews 3.13

<sup>18</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5.16-18; James 5.16

rejoice when they rejoice.<sup>19</sup> When necessary, we will exercise loving discipline in order to rescue members who willfully persist in sin.<sup>20</sup> When we make decisions together as a church we will do so prayerfully, seeking the glory of God and the good of all concerned.

## **My commitments to the PCF membership community**

Becoming more like Jesus happens best in Christian community. I want to live the Christian life together with my brothers and sisters at PCF, encouraging them and being encouraged by them. Because of this, I commit, by the power of the Holy Spirit<sup>21</sup> and the guidance of God's Word<sup>22</sup>, to pursue personal holiness and Christ-like behavior, even when this life of discipleship requires personal sacrifice.<sup>23</sup> I know that this is the path to full and lasting joy, so I will seek to increasingly surrender every area of my life to Jesus, obeying the teachings of the Bible, so that God's worth will be displayed in my life. When I fail, I will repent, trust the amazing promise of the gospel for forgiveness, and seek again to follow Jesus. I will speak gospel words, as God provides opportunities, to those in my life who don't know Jesus.<sup>24</sup>

I commit myself wholeheartedly to the PCF membership community. I will faithfully participate in PCF's weekly, gathered worship<sup>25</sup> and will meet regularly with other believers for biblical encouragement, prayer, and fellowship.<sup>26</sup> I will pray for my brothers and sisters at PCF<sup>27</sup> and will give of my time, money and giftedness in Christ-like service to them.<sup>28</sup> I will submit to the discipline of the Lord as it is lovingly and redemptively administered to me through the members of PCF.<sup>29</sup> I will respect, pray for, and follow the leaders God has given PCF as they follow Christ.<sup>30</sup> If I move from this area and am no longer able to be a member of PCF, I will become a member of another church where I can carry out the spirit of this membership commitment.

May God help us on this adventure as we wait *together* for our glorious future home, the new heavens and new earth, where righteousness dwells!<sup>31</sup> 'Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Romans 12.15

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 18.15-20; 1 Corinthians 5.1-13

<sup>21</sup> Romans 8.13

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 1.1-3; 119.97-99; 2 Timothy 3.14-17

<sup>23</sup> Mark 8.34-38; Ephesians 4.17-24; 2 Timothy 3.12-13

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 5.14-16; Romans 10.14-15; Colossians 4.5-6

<sup>25</sup> Acts 20.7; 1 Corinthians 16.2; Hebrews 10.24-25; Revelation 1.10

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 3.12-14

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 1.15-23; 3.14-21

<sup>28</sup> 1 Corinthians 12.4-7; 14.12; 16.1-2; 2 Corinthians 9.6-7

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 18.15-20; 1 Corinthians 5.1-13; 1 Thessalonians 5.14

<sup>30</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5.12-13; Hebrews 13.17; 1 Peter 5.5

<sup>31</sup> 2 Peter 3.13

<sup>32</sup> Ephesians 3.20-21