

Membership: Our Commitments To Each Other

Our denomination, The Wesleyan Church, provides oversight and accountability to our pastors, leaders, and church. Although the Wesleyan Church has definitive beliefs and structures, we strive for unity with those with different biblical convictions. We believe God is most glorified when we unite around ***essential*** beliefs and practices and extend liberty and grace in ***non-essentials***.

John 17:20-22 ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;" [NASB]

The Wesleyan Church is named in honor of John Wesley, a priest in the Church of England who was the inspiration and founder of the Methodist movement. Wesley was an outstanding Oxford scholar, yet regarded himself as "a man of one book," the Bible. It was while studying the Bible that he received assurance of his own salvation through faith. It was the Bible which motivated his vision for offering Christ to the common people of England in a way that led to that nation's greatest spiritual revival. It was biblical truth that inspired Wesley to develop a school for orphans, job programs, and medical assistance for the poor, efforts to reform inhumane prisons, and arguments for the abolition of slavery, a great evil of his time. Confidence in the Bible as "the only and sufficient rule for Christian faith and practice" (to use Wesley's own words) is still a hallmark of The Wesleyan Church today. For generations, The Wesleyan Church has held firm to the authority of the Bible and to the belief that the Bible impacts every aspect of human life.

What Beliefs Are Required to Join Trinity? Those who join Trinity Bible Church, are asked to declare their agreement with our Statement of Faith, which is a summarized version of the Wesleyan Articles of Religion. (A full statement of the beliefs of the Wesleyan Church is linked to on our website at cedarfallstrinity.org/beliefs) If you have questions or concerns about any of these doctrines or statements, we'll be happy to discuss them. Just contact Pastor Peter.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

GOD

The Trinity: There is one God, and within his essential nature are three distinct and equal persons. *Deut. 6:4; Matt. 3:16-17*

The Father: We believe in one living and true God, both holy and loving, eternal, unlimited in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Preserver of all things. *Psalm 90:2; 115:4; 147:5; Acts 17:24-25*

The Son of God: We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, fully God and fully man. *John 1:1; John 3:16; Philippians 2:6*

The Holy Spirit: He is the Administrator of grace to all mankind. He is ever present, assuring, preserving, guiding and enabling the believer. *John 16:7-11; Romans 8:15*

THE BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word and it is inspired and infallible. It is without error in its original manuscripts and its teachings carry the authority of God, himself. *2 Tim 3:15-17*

HUMANITY AND SIN

God's Purpose for Humanity: The two great commandments: love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, summarize God's law as it is revealed in the Bible. They are the standard for every area of life. *Lev. 19:18, 34; Matt. 5:44-48; 7:12; Mark 12:28-31*

God's Plan for Marriage and Sexuality: God's plan for human sexuality is that it is to be expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage. This is the only relationship which is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over every other human relationship. *Gen. 1:27-28; Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 1:26-28*

Sin Nature: Humanity's creation in the image of God included the ability to choose between right and wrong. We believe that sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, resulting in a fallen, broken world, and a sin nature within every human being. This sin nature now makes it impossible for us to choose what is right and it separates us from God. *Gen. 3; Jer. 17:9-10; Rom. 5:12-14*

SALVATION THROUGH JESUS

The Atonement: Jesus offered Himself, once and for all, through His sufferings and death on the cross, providing full payment for the sins of the whole world. Only those who put their faith in Jesus can receive this atonement and be forgiven of their sins. *Isa. 53; John 3:16; 1 John 2:2*

Repentance and Faith: God makes it possible for sinful human beings to voluntarily respond in repentance and faith (through prevenient grace). This ability comes from God,

but the act is the individual's. Repentance is a response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It involves a willful change of mind that renounces sin and longs for righteousness, a godly sorrow for and a confession of sin. Faith, in turn, is the only condition of salvation. It begins in the agreement of the mind and the consent of the will to the truth of the gospel. *Mark 1:15; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:8-10*

Justification: God declares a believer to be righteous, granting full pardon of all sin, delivering from guilt, and completely releasing from the penalty of sins committed. *Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:6-14*

Regeneration: When someone repents and puts their faith in Jesus, they are made new by the Holy Spirit. They are given new spiritual life with the capacity for love and obedience. *John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-8; 2 Cor. 5:17*

Adoption: The act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer becomes a partaker of all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a child of God. *Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:5-6*

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Good Works: Although good works cannot save us from our sins or from God's judgment, they are the fruit of faith and follow after regeneration. *Eph. 2:10; James 2:18, 22; 1 Peter 2:9, 12*

Sin after Regeneration: It is possible to fall into sin after regeneration, but by repentance and faith we can find forgiveness and restoration. *John 15:4-6; Heb. 10:35-39; 1 John 1:9*

Sanctification: That work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all their heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. God can give believers victory over sinful habits, actions, and attitudes. *Rom. 12:1-2, 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23-24*

THE CHURCH

The Church: Jesus is the founder and only Head of the Church, which is made up of all who believe in Jesus Christ. A local church is a body of believers formally organized on gospel principles, meeting regularly for the purposes of evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and worship. *Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:41-47; Eph. 4:11-12*

The Gifts of the Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the agent of all spiritual gifts and that these gifts are given to glorify God and not man. These gifts are to be exercised in love under the authority of Jesus and for the building up of the Church. While we do not seek to limit any personal and private expression of faith, we believe that only a language readily understood by the entire group is appropriate to use in any gathering of the church. *Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-14:40*

The Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the church commanded by Christ and ordained as a means of grace when received through faith.

Water baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward transformation of the heart and should be administered to all believers. *Matt. 3:13-17; Rom. 6:3-4*

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death and our hope in His victorious return, as well as a sign of the love that Christians have for each other. *Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-29*

ETERNAL DESTINY

Eternal Destiny: The Bible teaches that there is a conscious personal existence after death. The final destiny of each person is determined by God's grace and that person's response, evidenced inevitably by a moral character which results from that individual's personal and volitional choices and not from any arbitrary decree of God. Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final abode of those who choose the salvation which God provides through Jesus Christ, but hell with its everlasting misery and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect this great salvation. *Heb. 9:27; 2 Peter 3:7; Rev. 20:11-13*

The Second Coming of Christ: There will be a bodily resurrection from the dead at Christ's Second Coming. The certainty of the personal and imminent return of Christ inspires holy living and zeal for the evangelization of the world. *John 5:28-29; 2 Peter 3:9; Rev. 20-21*

What lifestyle practices Are Members of the Wesleyan Church Asked to 'Prayerfully Consider'?

The Wesleyan Church was founded on a conviction that faith in Christ changes us so that over time, these changes become visible to others and have an impact on our society. As an example, in the early 1800's, members of the Methodist Episcopal Church began urging their denomination to outlaw slavery within its ranks and to speak clearly for its abolition. The M.E. Church was fearful that such a stance would split the church down the Mason-Dixon Line. In 1842, frustrated with their inability to move the Church, a handful of local churches split from the M.E. Church and formed "The Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America," a loosely organized group of like-minded churches. This is the group that has grown to become the Wesleyan Church. Though slavery was the issue which led to the forming of our denomination, the undergirding (and more basic) passion was for a personal holiness that would radically change both individuals and the society in which we live. The Wesleyan Church was established on the concept that belief in Jesus Christ changes one's life: spiritually, morally, and socially. This change is called holiness. Our history is full of stories of men and women who have risked life and property to proclaim the Christ who accomplishes this holiness in His followers. Today, the Wesleyan Church International consists of about 400,000 people in nearly 5,000 churches and missions in 80 nations, and we still value a faith that shows up in our day-to-day lifestyle. Wesleyan Church members are encouraged to live a life that honors God by living out practices like...

- visiting the sick and caring for the poor
- refraining from the use and abuse of harmful substances
- refraining from sexual immorality

- respecting people of all ethnicities
- encouraging the nurture of one's children in the Christian faith
- refraining from membership in secret societies
- living honestly
- rejecting occult practices
- stewarding resources faithfully
- studying the bible personally
- refraining from gambling
- demonstrating Christ-like love towards one's spouse

A full statement of this call to lifestyle practices is entitled "Guides and Helps to Holy Living." It is included in your packet. (See Appendix #2.) These are not mandated for membership, but they do reflect traditional Wesleyan practices and help us define Christlike behavior.

MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES

WHY MEMBERSHIP?

Membership is a declaration that I intend to follow Jesus from within the authority He exercises through my local church. After the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the work of Jesus in this world is continuously described within the framework of local churches. Most of the NT letters are written to local churches rather than to individuals. Those written to individuals often describe how that individual ought to be leading his local church (see 1 Timothy 3).

Even Paul's missionary work is done under the auspices of the local churches in Antioch and Jerusalem, to which Paul would periodically report. God clearly values the local church and authorizes pastors and elders to engage in a relational form of leadership from within the local church structure (see 1 Peter 5:1-5, Hebrews 13:17, and others.) Membership simply acknowledges that I believe that Jesus is working through my local church and that I intend to follow Him from within this particular body

Membership Reflects Our Commitment and Connectivity.

- First, Scripture says we are a body.
- To reject the value of membership is to deny what God has already established in fact.

The Bible Teaches Covenant Community.

- Scripture teaches that we can be a part of the body, and we can be apart from the body.
- There is no such thing in the New Testament as a church without some recognition of belonging—membership. This has to involve some sort of formal process.

People Need Church Membership.

- People need membership commitment because they need to be connected to a Christian community.

- Individualist Christianity is a myth and a damaging pursuit. "...from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son he loves." (Col. 1:13) A kingdom has a king that has subjects and his kingdom is a community where we function together as God's people.

To become a formal member at Trinity, you need agree and sign the commitment form at the end of this packet and send it into the church office. Then we will arrange to have you share a short 3-5 minute testimony at our next Shepherding Board meeting to affirm your faith in Jesus.

By becoming a formal member, you are given various privileges and responsibilities. Our goal is not to devalue non-members, but to put the ownership and leadership of our church in the hands of those who are in alignment with our Biblical mission and theology. These privileges and responsibilities include:

Voting:

- *Lead Pastors:* New Lead Pastor candidate is recommended by the board, our formal members gather to vote on this recommendation. If this candidate receives a simple majority and accepts the offer, they become the new Lead Pastor. Lead Pastors are responsible for hiring staff, running the day-to-day operations of the church, and chairing the board.
- *Board and Officers:* Every year during our Annual Business Meeting, formal members elect Shepherding Board members and other officers. Our board consists of 6 lay members that each serve for a 3 year term and the Lead Pastor. Every year, two lay members leave our board for a required year-long hiatus, and two new lay members join the board. The board is entrusted by the congregation to oversee and govern the church. This includes guarding doctrine, setting our strategic direction, assisting in hiring key staff, and financial oversight.
- *Annual Budget and Major Building and Debt Decisions:* The congregation serves as a check and balance to the board and lead pastor in major financial decisions.

The Wesleyan Church has a unique blend of shared governance and decision-making authority divided between the board, congregation, and pastor. The Iowa-Minnesota District of the Wesleyan Church also serves as a check and balance to local church authority.

Serving as an Elected Officer:

Only members can serve as elected officers. In addition to the board, we have a Trustee, a Treasurer, and we send delegates to our annual District Conference. Also, membership in the Wesleyan Church is required before a pastor is ordained.

Annual Membership Reaffirmation:

Members are required to reaffirm their membership every year, usually in the Spring. Ultimately this is more than just filling out a form, this is about saying: "I am reaffirming my commitment to relationship with this body of believers."

The Wesleyan Church says: "If a member chooses not to participate in the annual reaffirmation process, that choice will be considered as a voluntary withdrawal from membership." We do give a 1 year grace period, so it is only after a member doesn't renew on 2 consecutive years that they are removed. Before we remove a member, we do follow up with them to make sure that they didn't just forget.

When someone does not reaffirm their membership, we contact them to ensure that they want to be removed, and then we remove them from our membership rolls.

There are several advantages to yearly reaffirmation:

- It provides another piece to our discipleship strategy. Rather than it being an additional "burden" or a requirement for members to "prove themselves," it is a joyful recommitment to a discipleship relationship with Trinity.
- Yearly affirmation provides proactive annual accountability for each member and their commitments. It creates another touchpoint with each member for better care, shepherding, and discipleship.
- Yearly reaffirmation allows us to better maintain our membership rolls, which minimizes church politics.

PRESERVING OUR UNITY

In the church, conflicts between members may arise periodically. This is not bad or wrong, because we even see conflict in the early church (Galatians 2:11). In fact, if handled well, conflict can be healthy and even necessary. We ask members to commit to the biblical steps of conflict resolution outlined in Matthew 18:15-17:

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and (1) rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he won’t listen, (2) take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. ¹⁷ (3) If he doesn’t pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn’t pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you.

The vast majority of conflicts are resolved simply by taking step number 1! But unfortunately people often choose to gossip or just leave the church when they feel hurt. If you ever have issues with our church, our leaders, or with other members, we ask you to commit to following these steps of biblical conflict resolution before leaving. We also ask you to refrain from the sin of gossip, which will destroy the unity of the church.

Remember, if you don’t like our direction as a church, you have the power as a member to be part of the solution through voting, serving, and being a positive influence on other members. When we do preserve our unity, this is a powerful witness to the watching world. Jesus said in John 13:34-35:

³⁴ “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Trinity Member Commitment Form

To become a formal member at Trinity, you need to read and adhere to the Statement of Faith on pages 2 – 5 of this packet, and sign the following form.

This form can be completed online by going to: bit.ly/tbccommitment

***Note:** Have you been a formal member of Trinity in the past and are wanting to renew your commitment? If yes, please go to cedarfallstrinity.org/members and click on the blue button "Renew Membership."

Once you have submitted this form online, it will be sent to the church office and we will follow up to set up a time for you to share your testimony at an upcoming Shepherding Board meeting. (2nd Monday of every month at 6:30pm)

If you prefer, you can mail the form below to:

Trinity Bible Church

125 Orchard Drive

Cedar Falls, IA 50613

My Commitment

Name: _____

- (1) I am a follower of Jesus. I believe that Jesus is my Savior and King.
Have you been baptized? (yes) (no)
- (2) I commit to being changed by Jesus.
- (3) I commit to the mission of Jesus to make disciples who make disciples.
- (4) I commit to grow as a disciple by following our Discipleship Pathway of:
Worship – Connect – Serve/Give – Multiply.
- (5) I affirm Trinity's Statement of Faith.
- (6) I commit to preserving our unity through biblical conflict resolution.

Signature _____ Date _____