

This membership handbook doubles as course content for prospective members: If that's you, we're glad you're interested in joining our fellowship. Here, at The Valley Church, we believe the local church is the spiritual family God has given us to worship him and express our spiritual gifts.

## MEMBERSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

As Christians, we are overwhelmingly dependent on the saving grace of God- without which, we are separated from him, forever. The radical nature in which we were saved draws us into worship of an almighty and holy God, and it's through the local church we do just that. As members of a local church, we also submit ourselves to the authority that God has given us to keep watch over our souls. Elders and members alike are tasked with carrying each other's burdens, never ceasing to pray for one another and seeking to edify the body.

Moreover, as a member, you are now a *representative* of Christ and his catholic (universal) church: In other words, you declare to be a representative of the Kingdom. As missionaries, we seek to glorify God in all things; at the very core, *this* is worship. We do this through submission and obedience to scripture where we learn of our mission to reach all peoples from ever nation, seeking to share the Gospel message, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Representative. That's exactly it. We represent Christ by joining the church. But who is The Valley Church? Let's dive into that question, but first, here's a quick overview of the contents of this handbook.

## HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

- I. Introduction to The Valley Church and its mission.
- II. Presentation of scripture and the Gospel.
- III. Explanation of the local church and its offices.
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## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE VALLEY CHURCH AND ITS MISSION.

### WHO IS THE VALLEY CHURCH?

The Valley Church is an Elder-led, SBC (Southern Baptist Convention) affiliated church plant based in Norwood, Ohio. We are a group of imperfect people worshipping and submitting to a perfect Savior.

We began meeting officially on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Evendale Elementary School in the Cincinnati area. Soon after, we moved into the Sharonville Cultural Arts Center for services in early 2016 and then later moved to Norwood in the Summer of 2017. We had the privilege of sharing Norwood Christian Church's facility with their congregation until early in 2018, where we were invited to share space with South Norwood Church of Christ. After a few months sharing their facility, they proposed our church's join. By the Spring of 2018, The Valley Church and South Norwood Church of Christ were joined under the tenant legal structure of The Valley Church which was led by Pastor Chuck Smith. Our current facility was given to us by SNCC.

### WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE VALLEY CHURCH?

The Valley Church is a congregation of born-again, baptized saints of Jesus Christ. We affirm scripture, the divinely inspired and inerrant word of God, as our sole authority in all matters including our mission as a church. From our God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we, as a body of believers, aim to, above all else, glorify God in all things; disciple the saints and equip them for missions and evangelism; teach and preach his word; and observe his commandments and ordinances.

## II. PRESENTATION OF SCRIPTURE AND THE GOSPEL.

### GOD AND CREATION

God is the sovereign ruler over all of existence. He created the Earth, the stars, galaxies and everything in between. Most precious of all his creation was man whom he made in his image, after his likeness. Everything he created in these six days was good.

Adam and Eve were made to exist in joyful community with God. He gave Adam and Eve free will and dominion over the Earth. He also gave them his law which was to refrain from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the midst of the Garden of Eden. God made clear the punishment for doing so was death. Before we continue the story, we need to better understand the nature and character of God.

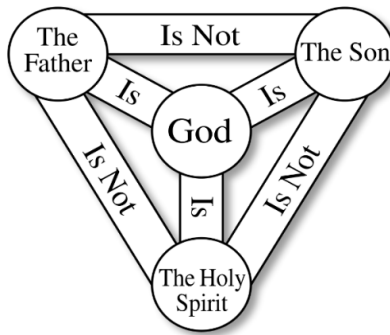


Figure 1: Shield of the Trinity

There is only one, true God. He is perfect, infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful and in all locations, always. Nothing exists beyond or outside of God or his domain. He is the source of truth, knowledge, love and goodness. He is our ultimate authority in all things. Among his many attributes, he is holy, just, gracious, merciful, immutable and eternal. God is one but he exists in three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each are equal as they are one, each deserving of our worship and obedience. Each, however maintain different functions.

### THE FALL OF MAN AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY

All was well between God and man, however, Satan had also been cast down to the Earth. Taking on the form of a serpent, he deceived Adam and Eve, tempting them into being like God. Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, transgressing God's law: This is known as *Original Sin*.

As we learned above, God is perfect in everything. He promised the result of defiance was death, so he must stay true to his word. Since he is also holy, he cannot tolerate anything evil. The existence of sin in humanity equates to complete unholiness. Therefore, because of original sin, humanity

was cast out of the garden away from God. Death entered humanity in the form of murder, disease, famine, etc. Man was no longer able to enjoy God and our relationship with him was broken indefinitely; we call this the *Fall of Man*.

Now, the natural state of man is sinful and therefore evil; humanity is no longer able to do good. Writing for DesiringGod.org, author Matt Perman of The King's College NYC explains man's fallen state as described in scripture:

*Scripture says that we are born sinners and that we are by nature sinners  
Psalm 51:5 states that we all come into the world as sinners: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Ephesians 2:2 says that all people who are not in Christ are "sons of disobedience." Ephesians 2:3 also establishes this, saying that we are all "by nature children of wrath." If we are all "by nature children of wrath," it can only be because we are all by nature sinners – for God does not direct His wrath towards those who are not guilty. God did not create the human race sinful, but upright. But we fell into sin and became sinful due to the sin of Adam.*

This fallen state means we are now inherently evil. Since God is not only good, but the source of goodness, our hearts cannot submit to God; we exist in open rejection of him. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul explains what we call *Total Depravity* starting in verse 10 of chapter 3:

*"As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*

## WRATH AND GRACE

As we learned, God is worthy of our love and affection; worship and praise; and submission and obedience. However, because mankind is totally depraved, it does not do any of these things: humanity hates and rejects God, by nature. This evil nature, to a righteous and just God deserves destruction. This destruction, or God's wrath, is perfectly deserving and the judgement is eternal damnation. No one is innocent; no one is without excuse. Continuing our reading in the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul puts it this way in chapter 1:

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

Nevertheless, the narrative does not end here. Man is God's greatest creation and he desires restoration with his people. He loves them deeply and has great concern for them despite becoming his enemy. God, in his loving mercy created a plan to redeem his people and at the center of that plan is God the Son: Jesus Christ.

The Savior, Jesus Christ, was sent to live among us as a man, firstly to give glory to himself but also to bear the penalty deserving "sheep". This is known as the *Penal Substitutionary Atonement*: Jesus sacrificed himself, completely undeserving of God's wrath, absorbed it nonetheless, so that his people could be reconciled back to him. Again, in Romans, in chapter 3, we read:

*...For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

Jesus was executed on the cross, willingly, and thereby made it possible for grace to abound for the wrath of God was satisfied. Three days after his crucifixion, Christ resurrected himself from the dead, crushing Satan's head as promised for deceiving Adam and Eve, and thus completing his mission to establish his kingdom what will reign forever.

For further reading in scripture, see 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 2:22-25; Titus 3:4-7.

## FAITH AND SALVATION

For us to receive the benefit of Christ's work on the cross, that is, for us to be reconciled back to God or rather to receive salvation from our sin, we must repent of our depravity and have faith in who Jesus Christ is. Jesus tells us in John 3, we must be "born again." The Apostle John explains further, "*whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*"

Paul continues his work in the Book of Romans, reaffirming this:

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

*Romans 1:16-17*

*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*

*Romans 2:21-22*

Scripture bleeds this truth all over, for further study you can begin by exploring in 2 Corinthians 5:6-7; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8.

So we understand that we must have faith in Christ, genuinely believing who he is. Genuinely professing belief in his work on the cross and knowing internally that he is the *only* way to eternal life with God. That we are not sufficient alone: not even in the slightest (remember total depravity). This is to say, that through Christ, only, are we *justified by faith alone*.

## A NEWNESS OF LIFE

Having new-found faith in Christ, what are we to do, then, as Christians? John Piper summarizes our mission as Christians in a talk he did at a conference in 2015:

*The one supreme, all-pervading, all-unifying mission of your life is to joyfully and sacrificially declare and demonstrate that the glory of Christ is more precious than life, and thus to help all people – including all the ethnic groups and all the religions of the world – discover the glory of Christ as their only hope of true and everlasting joy.*

What does this mean exactly? How does this translate practically? What we find is that our God-given faith *causes* us to walk in God's statutes. These good works or *fruits* are the product of faith. We find throughout scripture what it means to be a Christian. Our newness of life produces obedience and submission to those scriptures: This sanctification is not executed by any strength of our own but by the work of conviction by the Holy Spirit.

*I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

*Ezekiel 36:26-27*

We exposé God's word, pouring over it with prayer and submission so that we can discover God's desires for us, impressing on our hearts his calling for us. We do this not only so that we may have knowledge of him but that we may learn to become God-glorifying vessels, demonstrating the love he gave us, to everyone we come to meet. It's through scripture that God's Spirit convicts us to walk upright and in righteousness.

So to re-emphasize, God gives us faith and with that faith, he causes us to walk in obedience to him. If you think through that logic, it's important to ask the question that follows: What if someone professes faith but shows no fruit? Why does their life not reflect *newness*? The Book of James addresses this issue clearly starting in chapter 1:

*Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

*If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

If that is not totally clear, he summarizes it just a few verses later in chapter 2, verse 17: "faith by itself, if it does not have good works, is dead." Sobering thought but incredibly important to address, nevertheless. Here at The Valley Church you'll often hear us teaching through this concept this way: *It's impossible to be sanctified in Christ by God and not change.* If there is no fruit; there is no faith.

Just as important to mention here is that our service to Christ is not a begrudging submission. It's the complete opposite: Our connection with Christ leads us to a *cheerful* spirit of generosity, desiring submission to God and his ways. In this we find joy, peace and comfort because we are the products of mercy and fulfilling love- fully regenerated and indwelled with the Holy Spirit of God. You cannot force inward regeneration by outward good works, Jesus' righteousness is imputed to you from within, first.

The good news and doctrine on salvation is further examined in another course offering here at The Valley Church, please talk to a leader if you'd like to learn more. For the sake of this course, we'll conclude here.

### III. EXPLANATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND ITS OFFICES

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

In scripture, the Church is referred to as the body of Christ. That is, those who profess faith in God and are saved by his grace. Christians *are* the Church; It does not refer to a building or physical place. Moreover, in scripture we see evidence of what we call, the *local church*. The local church is an assembly of believers in a limited area relative to the rest of the Church.

The local church is established for worship and the expression of the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to stir each other up to good works. Every single person worships something because we were all designed to do so. As Christians, we aim to worship God, who solely deserves praise because of who he is and because of the great love with which he first loved us.

gathering on The Lord's Day; here the Gospel is taught and together, we observe the two sacraments: Baptism and The Lord's Supper. Often in Scripture we see the Apostle Paul writing a letter to a local church, i.e., the Book of Romans is an epistle addressed to the local church in Rome (these epistles usually addressed specific issues occurring in these local assemblies, but the instruction applies to the universal Church).

In Matthew 28, before Jesus ascends into heaven, he gives us the Great Commission. This scripture is where we get the instructions on what the church's role is. Starting in verse 18, we read:

*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

## WHY DO WE GATHER AS A CHURCH?

So why do we gather as a church? Pastor John Piper answers this question in a podcast episode of “Ask Pastor John” called, “Why Do Christians Worship Together on Sundays”:

*Christians are described in the Bible as not being merely isolated individuals, but a corporate body with many members, because they are all united to Jesus by faith. And it is because of this unity in Jesus, this corporate nature of Christianity, that the church exists. The church is not a building. It is not a structure of brick and mortar.*

*The church is the assembly of Christians gathered to express that unity in Jesus and to worship Jesus. The Bible says, “Now you” – Christians – “are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27).*



*Coming together in various assemblies is essential to giving expression to the fact that Jesus died to create a united people, not just isolated Christian individuals. We find in the Bible, then, descriptions of those first century Christians gathering regularly. This is what the question is about. Why do you go to church?*

*In 1 Corinthians 11:18 it says, "In the first place, when you come together as a church..." Or 1 Corinthians 14:23, "If, therefore, the whole church comes together." All those texts are followed by instructions for how to behave ourselves in the gathered church. Then we find indications in the Scriptures of what we should do when we come together.*

## HOW IS THE VALLEY CHURCH STRUCTURED?

In scripture we find two offices of the New Testament church: Elders (which are Pastors) and Deacons. In addition to that, we have the members of the church. All three positions play incredibly important parts in the success of a healthy church.

### ELDERS

The Valley Church is an Elder-lead church. This simply means the Elders in our church oversee the operation, health and vitality of our church. Before we jump into the qualifications of Elders, let's clarify something first: In scripture we see the word for a Pastor used in different ways, all of which denote the same *office*. The different words used are not actually different titles but better understood as different *roles* or *functions* of the same, single office. In other words, a Pastor is an Overseer, he is a Shepherd, he is an Elder, he is a Bishop, etc. So, when we say, "Elder," we are referring to a "Pastor" and vis versa.

The qualifications for the office of Elder (or Pastor, or Overseer) are drawn from scripture in a couple locations. The qualifications detailed below are found specifically in 1 Timothy 3:

#### *Qualifications for Overseers*

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

There are a couple things to point out here: Firstly, many of these qualifications are simply characteristics of Christians in general. Christians ought not be “a drunkard,” for example. It’s important, though, that pastors are good examples, inwardly and outwardly of these things. Moreover, if you notice in the first few words, “If anyone aspires...” We see here that the office is a calling: That is, God impresses on the hearts of his people who he wants to pastor. This calling is discovered through a lot of prayer, scripture reading and affirmation by the current pastors in the church.

## **DEACONS**

In addition to the office of Pastor, in scripture we find the office of Deacons. These people are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the church, from things like benevolence to facility management and everything in between. Where the Elders may approve a ministry’s existence and oversee its integrity, the Deacons will carry out the operation, executing work needed to produce the ministry. Elders spend most of their time studying scripture, praying over the church, teaching and preaching, counseling, etc. Deacons spend their time making sure the bills get paid, the elderly are tended to, the light bulbs get changed, etc.

Not everyone who serves in one of these capacities is a Deacon (*officially*, speaking). Deacons are more like the “leader” or “head” of a ministry or operation. Members fill in as volunteers serving under their direction. Although the role of Deacon is operations-based, there are still spiritual expectations of these individuals. Because they serve in a leadership position and therefore represent the church publicly, there are qualifications to becoming a Deacon. These, below, are also drawn from 1 Timothy 3:

### *Qualifications for Deacons*

*Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

## **MEMBERS**

Members make up everyone officially apart of the church (including Elders and Deacons). Members play a critical role in aiding the health of the local church. Membership at The Valley Church is reserved only for baptized Christians who complete this class and sign the Member Covenant. All of this and more will be talked about in depth in class three of this course.

## IV. DESCRIPTION OF COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Throughout the New Testament we see a continuous theme of the need for church membership:

- **The Example of the Early Church**  
Acts 2:41-47 shows one of the most explicit examples of living and functioning as a local assembly. Luke tells us that “many were added to the faith” and that they were united together as a community.
- **The Exercise of Church Discipline**  
Christ himself, along with Paul, lays out the specific instructions for how to interact with those who profess to believe in Jesus and walk in unrepentant sin. These instructions both assume and function best within a unified community that has covenanted together in membership (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8; Galatians 6:1).
- **The Existence of Church Government**  
The example in the New Testament is of a plurality of elders that are called to oversee each local body of believers. In addition to the roles themselves, we are also told the qualifications for these roles (1 Timothy 3:1-13, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- **The Essence of Spiritual Gifts**  
Scripture teaches us that every Christian is given a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit: Be it serving, giving, teaching, etc. Scripture also teaches that the gifts are given for the “common good” of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 1 Corinthians 12:8).

### WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

Membership in a local church is a participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity with the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not.

Here at The Valley Church, membership is predicated by **three** things; salvation and the ability to articulate the gospel message; baptism following salvation; and by agreeing to the membership covenant. In addition, all are expected to take complete this course and read the blue 9 Marks book on Church Membership (provided free for those who attend this course).

Scripture refers to members of the church like parts of a human body; there are ears, hands, a heart, etc. Each part plays a role in edifying the church for God’s glory. Some roles may not be *as* edifying as others, but all, are no less important. All are assembled by God’s sovereign providence through the working of the Holy Spirit. This is expressed in the spiritual gifts. All Christians possess a spiritual gift; some may even possess multiple. Discovering your spiritual gifting takes time and is affirmed by the rest of the body. You must get connected for that to happen though!

## WHAT IS A COVENANT?

A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise, usually under seal between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action”. Within the Scriptures, we find several examples of covenants, some between God and man (Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 2-; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), while others are solely between men (1 Samuel 18; 2 Samuel 5).

Some covenants are unconditional, meaning that two or more parties obligate themselves in such a way that the obligation of each party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other. In other words, there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person’s faithfulness.

Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other. While God’s gracious covenant with the Church universal is unconditional, the local church covenant itself is in part conditioned on the faithfulness of each party. If at any time one of the parties, the individual members or the corporate church body, fails in its obligations, the other party is freed from certain aspects of the covenant.

The covenant of The Valley Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of The Valley Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of the local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

As a church, The Valley uses a written covenant which can be signed by any individual meeting the qualifications written therein. The covenant does not expire but may be terminated under certain conditions.

## CHURCH DISCIPLINE

It is the responsibility of the Elders to advise members of the consequences of not abiding by their commitments, including eventual removal from membership. Elders are responsible, as described in Acts 20:28 to “be on guard for themselves and all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.” Shepherding includes both the care and correction of sheep. As consequences, the Elders may separate a member from The Valley Church for:

- Departure from the beliefs of The Valley Church.
- Conduct that mars the testimony of the church or evidence of a continued unrepentant departure from biblical morality.
- Manifesting disinterest and/or inactivity in the life of the church.

These conditions typically arrive because of unrepentant sin on the part of the member. Moreover, as a member, there is a responsibility to confront sin if witnessed. Think about growing up with siblings: If you saw your brother or sister doing something wrong, you loved them enough to confront them because you cared about their wellbeing. Never, though would you confront them for any other reason but to pull them out of their trouble, aiming for reconciliation and redemption. Confronting your brother or sister in Christ is the same and should always be done discreetly, gently and with love.

We find an explicit biblical process for exercising church discipline in Matthew 18:15-20. This process should be undertaken when there is clearly-understood sin. It's not designed for anything whimsical. If you're understanding of a situation is morally-*gray* or unclear, it's best to seek counsel, generically (i.e., it's important the situation is private and no specific information is revealed at first) from a leader or pastor:

*“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

The reason we're tasked with grabbing one or two other members if the person in question refused to repent is because it's possible they are not actually in sin and the situation is misunderstood. Bringing in a couple trusted resources who can examine the situation from an outside perspective brings fresh insight that can be very beneficial in mediating and resolving. The same goes for the third round of church discipline, only now there is consensus amongst the entire flock.

Finally, when Jesus says, “let him be to you as a Gentile and tax collector,” he's essentially saying, treat him as if he were not actually a believer. Remove them from membership and begin proclaiming the gospel to him because possible this person was never sanctified in Christ.

# GETTING CONNECTED AS A MEMBER

At The Valley Church, we offer a variety of opportunities for you to get connected to other people and the church. While we do not expect or want you to be involved in *every* program or initiative we offer, all members are strongly and actively encouraged to be connected in three main ways: Worship, Small Groups and Service.

## **WORSHIP**

Each Sunday morning at 10:30am, we meet at our building in Norwood for our primary, corporate worship service. Sunday's service is our dedicated time to worship Jesus Christ as a family through song, teaching of the Word and observing the Ordinances. This is the primary way to express your membership in our church and it's highly encouraged you make this a priority for your family.

## **SMALL GROUPS**

Also important are small groups. During the week, we have various groups meeting in different locations around the area to grow together, digging deeper into the teaching from Sunday. This time is designed for discussion, allowing for questions as we dissect what it means to become holy, follow God, and live selflessly. It's also a great opportunity to ask questions and dialogue about our trials and work through them together.

## **SERVICE**

Volunteering at The Valley Church is an essential part to growing in your faith. If you have a heart to help people, there is a place for you to use the talents that God has given you to further his kingdom. Moreover, a follower of Jesus is a cheerful giver, both financially and in terms of time. We hope that our members are encouraged to give to the church but if there is an ounce of you that is uneasy or not cheerful about giving, please don't. Nevertheless, scripture talks about our service to God: As much as you give, above all else, make sure you desire to give. Be prepared to be approached by someone in leadership to connect you into service: Their goal is to pour into you spiritually and to encourage you to serve our perfect Savior. Finally, as mentioned, your service to the church reflects your spiritual gifting. Some may have the gift of serving, some teaching, others mercy, etc.

## V. APPENDIX A: THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

SPIRITUAL GIFT	BRIEF EXPLANATION
LEADERSHIP	Leadership aids the body by leading and directing members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).
ADMINISTRATION	Persons with the gift of administration lead the body by steering others to remain on task. Administration enables the body to organize according to God-given purposes and long-term goals (1 Cor. 12:28).
TEACHING	Teaching is instructing members in the truths and doctrines of God’s Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11).
KNOWLEDGE	The gift of knowledge manifests itself in teaching and training in discipleship. It is the God-given ability to learn, know, and explain the precious truths of God’s Word. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth (1 Cor. 12:28).
WISDOM	Wisdom is the gift that discerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the body and applies His teachings and actions to the needs of the body (1 Cor. 12:28).
DISCERNMENT	Discernment aids the body by recognizing the true intentions of those within or related to the body. Discernment tests the message and actions of others for the protection and well-being of the body (1 Cor. 12:10).
EXHORTATION	Possessors of this gift encourage members to be involved in and enthusiastic about the work of the Lord. Members with this gift are good counselors and motivate others to service. Exhortation exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).
SHEPHERDING	The gift of shepherding is manifested in persons who look out for the spiritual welfare of others. Although pastors, like shepherds, do care for members of the church, this gift is not limited to a pastor or staff member (Eph. 4:11).
FAITH	Faith trusts God to work beyond the human capabilities of the people. Believers with this gift encourage others to trust in God in the face of apparently insurmountable odds (1 Cor. 12:9).

EVANGELISM	God gifts his church with evangelists to lead others to Christ effectively and enthusiastically. This gift builds up the body by adding new members to its fellowship (Eph. 4:11).
APOSTLESHIP (Missions)	Not to be confused with the Office of Apostle which has ceased; The church sends missionaries from the body to plant churches or spread the gospel. Apostles motivate the body to look beyond its walls to carry out the Great Commission (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).
SERVICE/HELPS	Those with the gift of service/helps recognize practical needs in the body and joyfully give assistance to meeting those needs. Christians with this gift do not mind working behind the scenes (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7).
MERCY	Cheerful acts of compassion characterize those with the gift of mercy. Persons with this gift aid the body by empathizing with hurting members. They keep the body healthy and unified by keeping others aware of the needs within the church (Rom. 12:8).
GIVING	Members with the gift of giving give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Cheerfulness and liberality are characteristics of individuals with this gift (Rom. 12:8).
HOSPITALITY	Those with this gift have the ability to make visitors, guests, and strangers feel at ease. They often use their home to entertain guests. Persons with this gift integrate new members into the body (1 Pet. 4:9).



## VI. APPENDIX B: AREAS OF OUR MINISTRY

AREAS OF MINISTRY	MINISTRY LEADER(S)	GIFTS EMPHASISED
ELDER BOARD	Chuck Smith, candidates	Leadership, Administration, Teaching, Knowledge, Wisdom, Discernment, Exhortation, Shepherding, Faith, Evangelism, Apostleship, Giving, Hospitality
DEACON BOARD	TBD	Leadership, Knowledge, Wisdom, Exhortation, Service/Helps, Giving, Hospitality
MISSIONS	Chuck Smith	Faith, Evangelism, Apostleship
THE VALLEY KIDS	Hollie McGuire, Rachele Smith	Administration, Teaching, Knowledge, Faith, Evangelism, Giving
THE VALLEY BABIES	Kylie Esch	Service/Helps, Giving
SMALL GROUPS	Michael Esch	Leadership, Teaching, Knowledge, Exhortation, Faith, Evangelism, Mercy, Hospitality
WORSHIP	William Burrows	Leadership, Wisdom, Faith
CONNECTIONS	Chuck Smith	Administration, Service/Helps, Mercy, Giving, Hospitality
THE VALLEY LADIES	Deborah Haddix	Leadership, Administration, Teaching, Knowledge, Wisdom, Discernment, Exhortation, Shepherding, Mercy
THE VALLEY GUYS	Chuck Smith	Leadership, Administration, Teaching, Knowledge, Wisdom, Discernment, Exhortation, Shepherding, Mercy
FINANCE	Dave McGuire	Administration, Giving

MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY	Matthew Baradihi	Service/Helps, Giving
FACILITIES	Morris Grubbs	Service/Helps, Giving
MARKETING/BRANDING	Ashley Baradihi	Service/Helps, Giving
EVENTS/PLANNING	TBD	Leadership, Administration, Service/Helps, Giving
BENEVOLENCE	TBD	Faith, Evangelism, Service/Helps, Mercy, Giving, Hospitality

## VII. APPENDIX C: STATEMENT OF FAITH

### THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God. Therefore, all scripture is authoritative, infallible and inerrant. The Scriptures are the only sufficient rule for faith and practice (Ps. 19:7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

### GOD

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience that springs from faith (Deut. 6:4; Ps. 145:3; John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 1:17).

### THE TRINITY

The Scriptures reveal that the one God eternally exists in three persons: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person has distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

### PROVIDENCE

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures (Isa. 46:9-11; Prov. 16:33; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Jas. 1:13-15).

### ELECTION

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit or foreseen faith in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:27-29; Eph. 1:4, 11).

### THE FALL OF MAN

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, Adam transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law. (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:1-3).

## THE MEDIATOR

Since Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is fully God and fully man, He is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law; suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He will return visibly and bodily. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe (Isa. 53:10-12; John 1:1, 14; Acts 1:9-11; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:1-3).

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that God the Holy Spirit brings glory to the Father and the Son. He applies the work of Christ to believers and distributes spiritual gifts to every believer according to His sovereign good pleasure for building up the body of Christ. He is the Comforter, the Spirit of Adoption, the Seal of our Salvation and the Guarantor of our inheritance in Christ (John 14:16-17; 16:14; Acts 5:3; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:13-14).

## REGENERATION

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who gives life to those dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone, so that the ultimate cause of regeneration is God's grace, not man's free will (Eph. 2:1-6; Tit. 3:5; 1 John 5:1).

## REPENTANCE

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-aborrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God to please Him in all things (Acts 2:37-38; 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10-11).

## FAITH

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatever is revealed in His word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness (Rom. 3:27-28; 4:1-5; 4:17-25; 10:14, 17; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8; Jas. 2:14-26).

## JUSTIFICATION

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith (Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:34; 10:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

## SANCTIFICATION

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-28; Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:13-24; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

## PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

All those whom God has regenerated will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6).

## THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus is the head of the church, which is composed of all His true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to His commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular churches; and to each of these churches He has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which He has appointed. The regular officers of a church are Elders (Pastors) and Deacons (John 10:16; Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 1:22; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-18; Tit. 1:5-9; Heb. 10:25).

## BAPTISM

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. Baptism is prerequisite to church membership. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13)

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church membership (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

## THE LORD'S DAY

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10).

## LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake (Matt. 15:9; Rom. 13:1-7; 14:4; Acts 5:29; Col. 2:20-23).

## MARRIAGE

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

## THE RESURRECTION

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. The bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-28; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23).

## THE JUDGMENT

God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting and conscious punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life (Matt. 25:46; John 5:22, 27-29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 7:13-17; 14:9-11).

## APPENDIX D: MEMBER COVENANT

Having been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up myself to him, and having been baptized upon my profession of faith, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, I do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully affirm the following statement of faith and submit to the membership covenant:

1. I believe in one God, self-existent in three Persons, co-equal and co-eternal; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe in the Bible, God's infallible Word, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme authority for faith and practice.
2. I believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, who became man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life and died a sufficient and substitutionary death for his people. He arose bodily from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father where He is now our interceding High Priest.
3. I believe that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person who reveals Christ, both in a ministry to the world by restraining evil and by convicting of sin, and in a ministry to the Church by indwelling, empowering, guiding, and teaching all Christians.
4. I believe that man was made in the image and likeness of God and by transgression incurred guilt before God, depravity of soul, and spiritual death. I believe in the atonement Christ provided, that those who repent and believe on Him are justified from the practice of sin.
5. I believe in the true universal Church as the Body of Christ. It is composed of all true believers in Christ. It was created by Him for worship and fellowship and is commissioned by Him to publish the Gospel to all the world.

### MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

1. I will submit to the authority of scripture as the final arbiter on all issues, and to the elders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within.
2. I will walk together with my church in brotherly love, and as a member of a Christian church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over them and faithfully admonish and entreat them as occasion may require.
3. I will assemble faithfully for worship and fellowship with the church body and pursue a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer and fellowship.
4. I will faithfully share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the hope of others coming to salvation through him.
5. I will rejoice with everyone's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear their burdens and sorrows.

6. I will seek, by divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, remembering that I have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in the newness of life.
7. I will faithfully confess sin to God and to other believers when necessary, repent, and seek help to put sin to death.
8. I will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as the church sustains its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.
9. I will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all nations.
10. I will be bound by this church's covenant, constitution, and statement of faith in all matters pertaining to church membership and church discipline.

## TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership at The Valley Church is entirely voluntary and may be terminated at any time for any of the following reasons:

1. Voluntary termination by any member, in good standing, upon written request of that member.
2. Transfer of membership to another church of the member's choice by letter.
3. At the discretion of the Elders of the Valley Church

Involuntary termination may result from a member failing to submit to the Elders, and when it is in the unanimous opinion of the Elders, necessary for the care or correction of the church or the member in question. The Elders, in their sole discretion, may communicate to the congregation the fact of, and reason for, involuntary termination of a member.

*Having read and understood this covenant and the Valley Church's statement on the termination of membership, I profess that I have been Saved and Baptized and that I wholly and voluntarily submit myself to this covenant and statements herein.*

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*(Signature, Covenant Member)*

*(Printed Name)*

*(Date)*

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*(Signature, Elder in Affirmation)*

*(Printed Name)*

*(Date)*