



Membership Covenant

Heritage Christian Fellowship exists to Exalt the
Lord, to Equip His Saints, and to Engage the World
around us with the gospel of Jesus Christ

The Heritage Christian Fellowship Membership Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members, whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy, which is found in the presence of the Lord. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

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

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

The Heritage Christian Fellowship Membership Covenant is comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, the Statement of Basic Beliefs, the Statement of Theological Distinctives, the obligations of the HCF elders to HCF body and the obligations of members to HCF body.

What is the Church?

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

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in the grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Cor. 5:17-20). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2,9), and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). First Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

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

What is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action."¹ Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Gen. 6, 9, 15; Ezek. 20; Hos. 2; Jer. 31; Matt. 26), while others are solely between men (1 Sam. 18; 2 Sam. 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God's covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

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

¹ Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Includes Index. 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993)

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere.

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

Benefits of a Church Covenant

We realize that the formalizing a natural relationship may seem strange to many. But membership allows us to form a relationship with the people at Heritage that has genuine depth. It helps define those who are committed to the work that God is doing through Heritage. To be a member of a church is to make a public promise, or covenant, to use the Biblical term, to live according to the Word and to support the work of the congregation. Every believer is part of the church as organism (the Spiritual Body of Christ), but only via a public promise can you be part of the church as organization. According to the Bible, a covenant is the basis for all societal relationships: marriage, employment, citizenship, church membership, friendship, etc.... These are all relationships of promise or covenant. So what are some of the tangible benefits of belonging to Heritage as covenant members?

Accountability

Being a member at Heritage Christian Fellowship assures you that there is someone who cares enough to speak into your life. Many people may flow in and out of the doors of a church and not be known. Membership makes you known and gives the leadership at Heritage a glimpse into your values, beliefs, and actions. It expresses a commitment to know one another and encourage each other toward holiness. This may come in the form of instruction, exhortation, and even discipline when a member is not easily entreated.

Priority

At Heritage, we covenant to give priority to members of the church. This in no way means we do not serve those outside of the church, God forbid! But an

emphasis comes first on those who are part of this particular fellowship. Church members have made a commitment to the church body; a commitment to serve to contribute in various ways to the life of the church. The visitor, on the other hand, has made no such commitment. Biblically, the church family is compared to that of a biological family, and we see covenant membership kind of like a marriage. We care for all, but we care for family with special attention and priority.

Transparency

At Heritage, we recognize that people who commit themselves to the work of the Kingdom through our local church body have a right to ask questions. Throughout the year we plan to bring financial reports that allow you to see how the resources at Heritage are being used for God's glory. People who attend Heritage and give will receive a year-end statement of what they have given. Members will receive additional information that will give a more full picture of the work of the church and use of God's resources. We also commit to giving you reports that detail the results of initiatives that the church seeks to accomplish throughout the year whether favorable or not. In addition, members are invited to ask any questions you may have regarding profit and loss statements, financial accountability, and stewardship.

Reciprocity

At the end of each year each member will be presented with a questionnaire to fill out. This survey will give members an opportunity to give input on the successes and failures of our church, the ways in which members are growing or struggling, and provide a feedback loop that lets us know how we can best serve each member better. In this way, the leadership of Heritage hopes that the Holy Spirit will give wisdom not just in the counsel of elders, but the multitude of counselors. The leadership commits to serving the body by implementation and the body commits to serving the leadership thru support and feedback that enables us to get better at leading.

Unity

We live in a culture of rugged individualism. When a Christian commits themselves to a local body of believers, they are choosing togetherness. At Heritage we believe that more is accomplished together than separate. In being a member of Heritage Christian Fellowship, you are becoming a part of a team. We labor together, strategize together, and together we celebrate the grace of God at work in our community. We are fellow partakers in all that the gospel is accomplishing through Heritage. Those who attend Heritage get to experience joy by observing God's work. But those who are members of Heritage get to experience the delight that comes with knowing that God has done all that He desires through them as a

vessel. Members own the work and experience the joy of the work of Heritage uniquely.

Pastoral Care

While we seek to provide pastoral care for anyone we can, particular attention is given to covenant members. Elders are given membership rosters to pray for individuals and families within the church during the year. Members who seem to have disappeared from fellowship will be lovingly sought out and care offered. In general, covenant membership gives the leadership at Heritage Christian Fellowship the ability to ensure pastoral care to those who have covenanted with us.

Prerequisites for Membership

For someone to apply to become a member at Heritage Christian Fellowship, they must first meet the following criteria:

- Be a baptized follower of Christ at least 18 years of age.
- Must have attended Heritage for minimum of 6 months.
- Must have read and agree to this Heritage Christian Fellowship Membership Covenant and the Heritage Mission and Core Values statement.
- Must have attended a “Heritage Basics” meeting.
- In some situations, the leadership may request a personal meeting, either to meet new members, get more info, or clarification to questions.

Heritage Statement of Basic Beliefs

The gospel is the hope of the world. As we read the Scriptures, we see the overarching themes of God’s providence, power and provision to reconcile mankind and the created world to Himself through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In light of this, we aim to be explicitly gospel-centered in all that we preach, teach, and practice.

I believe...

- The Scriptures are true, authoritative, and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- There is only one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6, 46:9-10; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7, 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17, 28:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
- All things exist for the glory of God (Psalm 148; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 61:3; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 1:3-14).

- All humanity, Christ excluded, is sinful by both birth and action² (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23, 5:8, 5:12-21, 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- The deserved penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:19; Romans 5:12, 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin and is both fully God and fully human (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4, 14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- Jesus Christ died as the sacrificial substitute to pay the penalty for sin (John 1:29, 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will one day physically return (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 1:20-21:25, 14:3; 1 Corinthians 15:12-34; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- There will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Only those who turn from sin and to Jesus in faith and repentance will be raised to eternal reward.³ Those who do not turn from sin and to Jesus will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- Only through faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin can one be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy (John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).⁴

Statement of Theological Distinctives

While the doctrines expressed in the Statement of Basic Beliefs are recognized to be universal and primary within the Church, there are a number of secondary beliefs that we are passionate to proclaim. Not all Christians hold these beliefs, but they are nonetheless important and true as we understand the Scriptures. Complete agreement is not required for the

² We recognize that Adam and Eve were not “born” and were not created sinful; rather, they became sinful through their action.

³ This is not intended to deny the salvation of Old Testament saints but is instead a recognition that they were saved through faith in Jesus Christ, though the content of that faith was less clear than it is for us on this side of the cross and resurrection.

⁴ See Previous Footnote.

sake of membership, but it should be known that we will preach, teach, and counsel in accordance with these convictions.

These distinctives represent six areas of doctrine and practice:

- Divine sovereignty
- The centrality of the gospel
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit
- The complementary roles of men and women
- Believer's baptism by immersion
- The relationship of God's glory to man's joy

Finally, we understand the importance of submission to church leadership and expect all covenant members will be diligent to preserve unity and peace and will adhere to the Statement of Basic Beliefs, without being divisive over the theological distinctives.

Biblical Obligations of the Heritage Elders to the Covenant Members

Elders to the Heritage Body

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

The elders covenant...

- To prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- To care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
- To equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- To be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- To lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one

disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

- To set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

Biblical Obligations of the Covenant Members to the Heritage Body

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

I covenant...

- To submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- To pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- To follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - By being baptized after my conversion.
 - By regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- To regularly participate in the life of Heritage (HCF) by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community, and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- To steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

- By God’s grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:
 - I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex, and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Heritage before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul’s concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).
 - I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- To refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23).
- To take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- To submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - Following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another—the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - Receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- To do the following when I sin:
 - Confess my sin to God and to fellow

believers.

- Repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- To submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).
- To do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:
 - To notify an appropriate staff member of Heritage Christian Fellowship.
 - To seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

Annual Covenant Renewal

While we view such a covenant and its implications and obligations to be a longstanding commitment, for the sake of organization and for more accurate care of the church body, this covenant will be renewed on an annual basis. The annual renewal form will contain a feedback opportunity for communication on issues between the Heritage body and the leadership. In addition, those choosing to end their covenant with the Heritage body will have opportunity to notify us of your severance of this covenant on the annual covenant renewal form. This form will be sent out to all covenant members at the end of each calendar year.

The pastoral staff and leadership are available to answer any questions you might have regarding covenant membership at Heritage. Feel free to contact us by email at: info@heritagefellowship.net. We are more than happy to help with any questions or provide copies of the Heritage Christian Fellowship Bylaws, which detail other operations, procedures, and structures.



COVENANT MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____ Phone # _____

Address _____ Email _____

Spouse Name (If Applicable) _____

Names and Ages of Children (If Applicable) _____

Please indicate that you agree with each statement:

- I recognize that my sin has separated me from God and condemned me to death, but that Jesus Christ has mercifully lived on my behalf, carried my sin to the cross, died and resurrected, defeating sin and death, and has ascended into heaven, and by faith I trust in His sacrifice for salvation and eternal life. I have been saved by God's grace, not my works, and desire to follow live for Him by the power of His Holy Spirit, anxiously awaiting His return.
 I Agree
- Give a brief account of your conversion to Christ (use back of this form if needed):
- I have been baptized (following my conversion to Christ) _____ (Yes/No)
"Heritage Christian Fellowship does not believe that baptism is required for salvation, however, we DO believe that it is a key example of our obedience to Jesus Christ and an important picture of His work of regeneration in the believer's life. Thus, Heritage holds that baptism is a requirement for membership."
- I have received and carefully read, and with integrity agree to the Heritage Christian Fellowship Membership Covenant and the Heritage Mission and Core Values Statement:
 I Agree
- I have attended Heritage Christian Fellowship for ____ years and ____ months (Minimum 6 month requirement).
- I have attended a Heritage Basics class. (Date attended: _____)
 I Agree
- I have previously held membership in _____ Church.

I hereby apply for membership at Heritage Christian Fellowship.

Signature _____ Date _____

"...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15