



Starting Point

Six sessions designed to help you learn more about RCC.

Starting Point is your RCC membership booklet. This booklet corresponds to the videos you will need to watch. Please note that the page numbers referenced on the video do **not** correspond to the page numbers in this document. Minor revisions were made to this document which did not impact the videos. This will not affect your ability to follow the booklet along with the videos.

- **Session 1:** The RCC Story. The history, vision and distinctives of RCC. [Watch video 1](#)
- **Session 2:** The Core. What we believe and teach as a church. [Watch video 2](#)
- **Session 3:** Doing Life Together. What community looks like at RCC. [Watch video 3](#)
- **Session 4:** Shalom. Living in a culture of peace and peacemaking. [Watch video 4](#)

You will view the final two videos at the next scheduled Prospective Membership Meeting:

- Session 5: Send, pray, go or disobey. Participating in the mission of the church.
- Session 6: Members of one another. What a commitment to membership means.

"Church membership: joining your imperfect self to other imperfect selves to form an imperfect community for the glory of God"

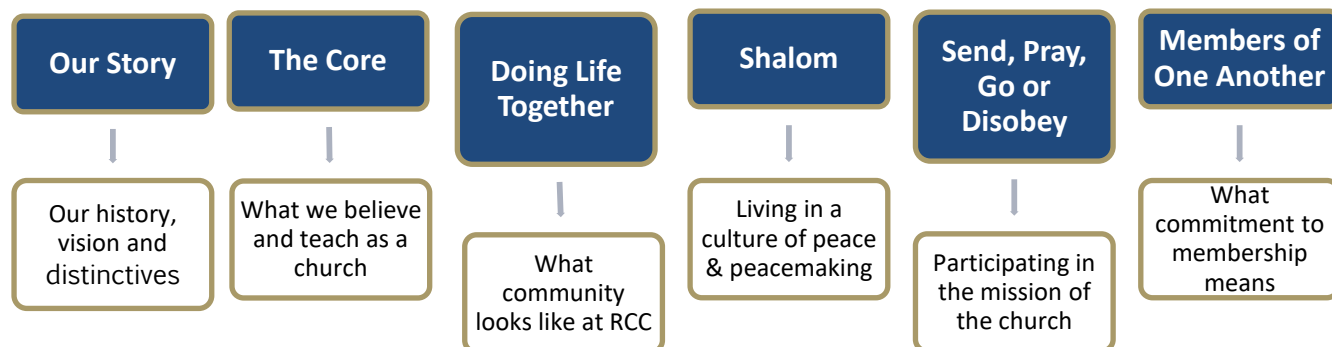
— Scott Sauls

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Starting Point

Starting Point has six (6) sessions designed to help you learn more about Redeemer Community Church (RCC). The six sessions will cover these subjects:



In addition, this document contains some essential information that will help amplify and clarify what being part of RCC looks like, and how you fit in.

Appendix A: Doctrinal Statement and Constitution

Appendix B: Living out our commitment to our marriage vows

Appendix C: Living out our commitment to caring for our children

Appendix D: Our commitment to biblical counseling and confidentiality

Appendix E: Our commitment to accountability and church discipline

Ultimately, the goal of **Starting Point** is to help you decide if RCC is a fit for you – if you can grow and serve God as a part of this covenant community.

And along the way remember, questions are encouraged!

▪ Session 1. The RCC Story — Our History, Vision and Distinctives

Our History

In February 2008, a group of individuals and families met together to consider joining with one another to begin a new church in Little Rock. This group shared a common vision for a church where the Bible is clearly and simply taught, where people join for heartfelt worship, and where individuals and families are challenged to live out their faith by loving and serving others. We longed to be part of a community of faith that is anchored solidly in what the Bible teaches, that is culturally aware, and that seeks to tell others about Jesus and to help them become fully devoted followers of Christ.

From that beginning, RCC was born. We agreed to meet each week for worship on Saturday nights. Arrangements were made to use the chapel at Lutheran High School each week, and the first worship service was held on February 9, 2008. Each week, we come together to sing a mix of traditional hymns and contemporary songs, to study the Word of God as it is taught verse by verse and to share the Lord's Supper together.

Our Vision

We believe that the Bible, worship, community and mission are essential elements of a healthy church, but are all ultimately centered in Jesus and His gospel.

Embracing a God-centered gospel instead of a man-centered substitute gospel:

We have "lost our grip on the biblical gospel. Without realizing it, we have during the past century bartered that gospel for a substitute product, which, though it looks similar enough in points of detail, is as a whole a decidedly different thing..."

This substitute gospel (which is no gospel at all) "...fails to make men God-centered in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts, because that is not primarily what it is trying to do. One way of stating the difference between (the substitute gospel) and the old gospel is to say that it is too exclusively concerned to be 'helpful' to man – to bring peace, comfort, happiness, satisfaction – and too little concerned to glorify God."

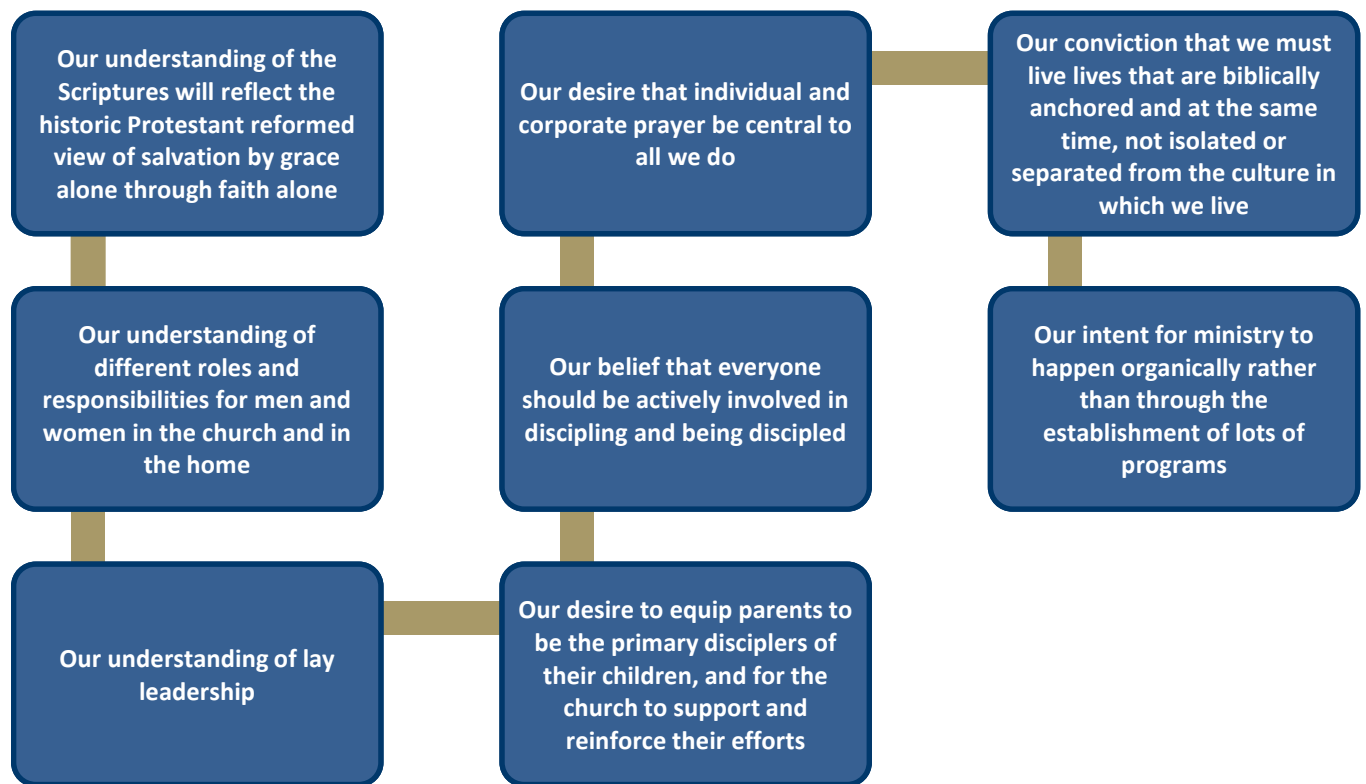
"The old gospel was 'helpful', too—more so, indeed, than is the new—but (so to speak) incidentally, for its first concern was always to give glory to God... Its center of reference was unambiguously God. But in the new gospel the center of reference is man.... The chief aim of the old was to teach people to worship God. The concern of the new seems limited to making them feel better."

"Part of the biblical gospel is now preached as if it were the whole of that gospel; and a half-truth masquerading as the whole truth becomes a complete untruth."

"...this set of twisted half-truths is something other than the biblical gospel... To recover the old, authentic, biblical gospel, and to bring our preaching and practice back into line with it, is perhaps our most pressing present need."

-J.I. Packer in his introduction to the 1958 reprint of John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

Our Distinctives



▪ Session 2. The Core — What we believe and teach as a church

Doctrinal Statement (Appendix A)

- The Triune God
- The Scriptures
- Creation and Humanity
- The Fall
- The Plan of God to Rescue Mankind
- The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- The Kingdom of God
- The Church
- The Restoration of All Things

Worship Statement

Worship is a broad term that encompasses the variety of ways we ascribe worth or value or honor to God. Harold Best, in his book Music Through the Eyes of Faith defines worship in the broadest sense as *“acknowledging that someone or something else is greater – worth more – and by consequence, to be obeyed, feared, and adored...Worship is the sign that in giving myself completely to someone or something, I want to be mastered by it.”* (pg. 143)

When we gather together for times of corporate worship at RCC, our worship centers on four ways in which we express our devotion to God:



▪ Session 3. Doing Life Together — What community looks like at RCC

The Biblical Case for Community

The One Anothers of Scripture

In the study guide for [Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything](#), Tim Keller offers a helpful way of thinking about and organizing biblical passages into the categories of affirming one another, sharing with one another, and serving one another. He suggests *“nine ‘community-building practices’— specific behaviors that build Christian community”*.¹

Affirm

1. Affirm one another’s strengths, abilities, and gifts
 - Romans 12:10: “Honor one another”
 - James 5:9: “Don’t grumble against each other”
 - Romans 12:3-8: Confirm the gifts of one another
2. Affirm one another’s equal importance in Christ.
 - Romans 15:7: “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you”
 - 1 Corinthians 12:25: “Have equal concern for each other”
 - 1 Peter 5:5: “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another”
 - James 2:1: “Don’t show favoritism”
3. Affirm one another through visible affection.
 - Romans 16:16: “Greet one another with a holy kiss”
 - James 1:19: “Be quick to listen, slow to speak”
 - Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind and compassionate to one another”
 - 1 Thessalonians 3:12: “[May] your love increase and overflow for each other”

Share

1. Share one another’s space, goods, and time.
 - Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love”
 - 1 Peter 4:9: “Offer hospitality to one another”
 - Galatians 6:10: “As we have opportunity, let us do good”
2. Share one another’s needs and problems.
 - Galatians 6:2: “Carry each other’s burdens”
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11: “Encourage one another”
 - Hebrews 3:13: “Encourage one another daily”

3. Share one another's beliefs, thinking, and spirituality.
 - Colossians 3:16: "Teach and admonish one another"
 - Ephesians 5:19: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs"
 - Romans 12:16: "Live in harmony with one another"
 - 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Agree with one another"

Serve

1. Serve one another through accountability.
 - James 5:16: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other"
 - Romans 15:14: "Instruct one another"
 - Ephesians 4:25: "Speak truthfully"
2. Serve one another through forgiveness and reconciliation
 - Ephesians 4:2: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love"
 - Colossians 3:13: "Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another"
 - Galatians 5:25: "Don't provoke or envy one another"
 - James 4:11: "Do not slander one another"
 - Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15: Re-establish broken relationships with one another
3. Serve one another's interests rather than our own.
 - Hebrews 10:24: "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds"
 - Romans 15:1-2: "Don't please yourself but please others"
 - Galatians 5:13: "Serve one another"

Core Values of Community at RCC



Horizontal and Vertical Community

Life on Life – Growing (Drinking In) and Helping Others Grow (Pouring Out)

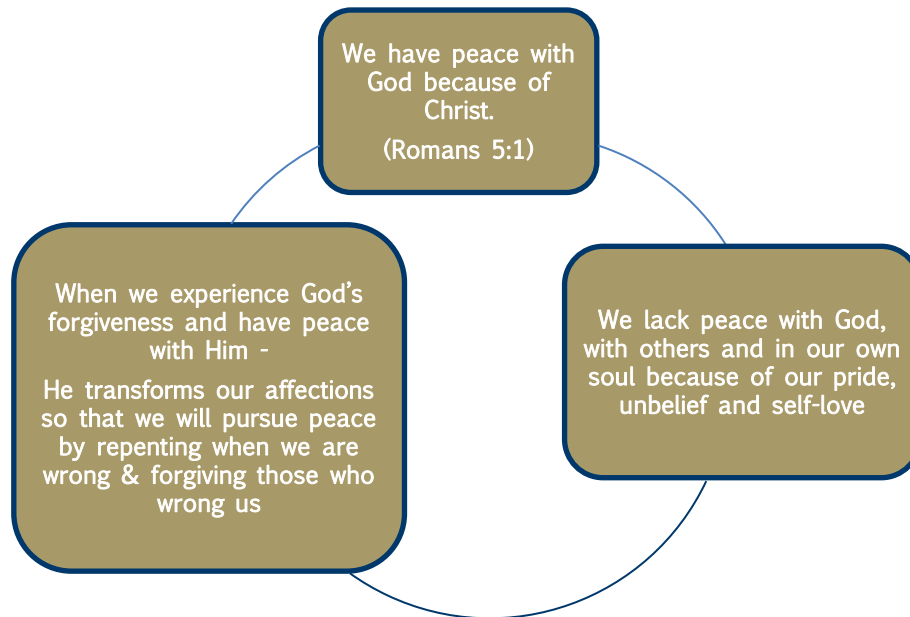
How We Live Out Community – Community Groups

Commitment to Biblical Counseling & Confidentiality (Appendix D)

Commitment to Accountability & Church Discipline (Appendix E)

▪ Session 4. Shalom — Living in a culture of peace and peacemaking

Our church desires to build a “*culture of peace*” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness, and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to Himself through the sacrifice of His only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-1; Rom. 12:18; Eph. 4:1-3).



Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words, and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will seek to refrain from all gossip, backbiting, and slander (Eph. 4:29-32). If we have a problem with others, we intend to talk to them, not about them.
- We will endeavor to make charitable judgments toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).⁶
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will seek reconciliation without delay (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).

- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- As we seek to resolve differences with others, we will look out for their concerns and interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them freely and fully as He has forgiven us so that we might glorify His reconciling grace (Eph. 4:32).

Assisted Peacemaking

- When two or more of us cannot resolve a conflict privately—whether it’s personal or has church, business, or even legal implications—we will obey God’s command to be “*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph. 4:3) by looking to our church for assistance and cooperating with our leaders or wise people they recommend to resolve the matter through biblical mediation or arbitration (Matt. 18:16; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).⁷
- If we have a conflict with a person who attends another church, we will make every effort to cooperate with our church leaders as they seek to work with the leaders of the other church to resolve the matter in a biblically faithful manner.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his/her former church, we will assist him/her, when possible, to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our *Commitment to Accountability & Church Discipline*. (Appendix E)
- If we have a dispute with or within our church as a corporate body and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will make every effort to resolve our differences through biblical mediation or arbitration before we resort to other processes.

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will be a means of spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy (and peace) of all peoples through Jesus Christ.²

Helping Each Other Experience Peace at Home

- Appendix B: Living out our commitment to our marriage vows
- Appendix C: Living out our commitment to caring for our children

▪ Session 5. Send, Pray, Go or Disobey — Participating in the Mission of the Church

Not missions. Mission.

"Evangelism is announcing that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Savior and Liberator. In this Jesus, incarnate, crucified and risen, the reign of God has been inaugurated." - D.J. Bosch

"The Great Commission is first to delight yourself in the Lord (Ps 37:4). And then to declare, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps 67:4). In this way God will be glorified from beginning to end and worship will empower the missionary enterprise till the coming of the Lord." - John Piper

Why? And why us?

"It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church." - Jurgen Moltmann

Two tracks that carry the gospel

PROCLAMATION

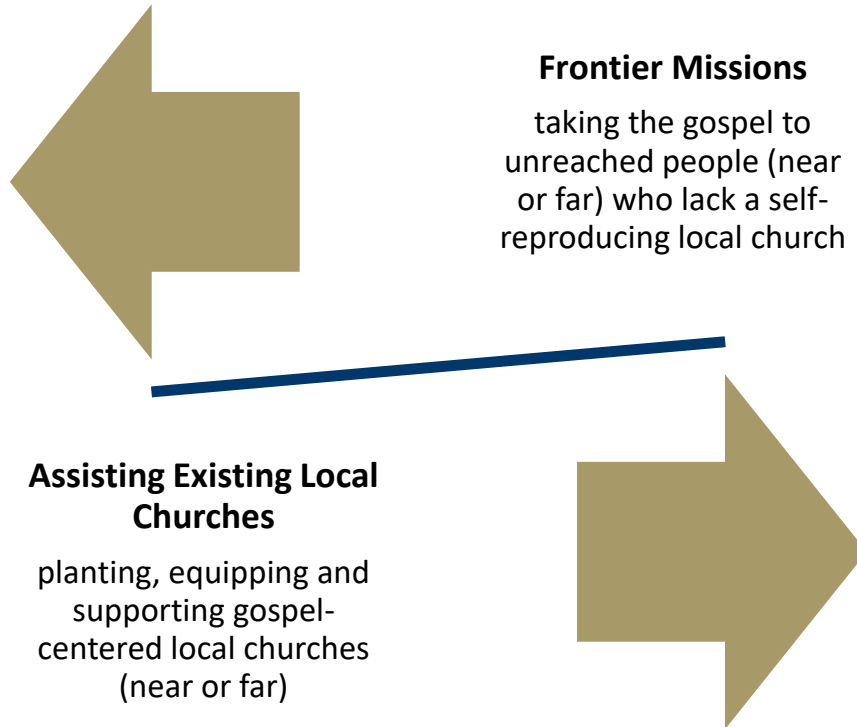
·Romans 10:14-15

DEMONSTRATION

·James 2:14-17; Matt. 25:33-40

"Evangelism may be described as the proclamation of the Gospel message in word and deed, in an honest and loving way, so that those who receive the message may accept it, reject it or ignore it. Thus, the action is proclamation, in both word and deed: and the message is the news of God's saving activity in the person and work of Christ. That through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people have an opportunity to have a right relationship with God." - Alan Robinson

Two strategies to support



*“Evangelism without the church is incomplete;
the church without evangelism is ingrown.” – Paul Hiebert*

▪ Session 6. Members of One Another — What a Commitment to Membership Means

The Commitment of Leadership to the Covenant Members of RCC

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 an overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The Elders covenant:

- to appoint elders and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- 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 the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love (Matt. 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 (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary for the glory of God, the good and restoration of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- to set an example of and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:3).

The Commitment of Members to One Another

To grow as Christians and to be part of what God wants to accomplish on earth, we need to be committed to one another in the Body of Christ, in “intentionally intrusive, grace-based, Christ-centered redemptive relationships.”³ Membership in a local church is essentially a pledge or a commitment not to an organization or an institution, but to other people, to be “*members of one another*” (Romans 12:5).

The following statements are designed to describe how we will live together in community as a part of RCC.

As members of one another, we pledge ourselves to the following commitments:

Our Commitment to God's Word

- We are committed to affirming the basic tenets of the Christian faith that have been understood and affirmed by the church throughout its history, that are addressed in the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian church, and that are articulated in the Redeemer Community Church Statement of Faith. (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).
- We desire to be accountable to one another and to graciously and lovingly warn and admonish one another if we deviate from the essential truths of Scripture (Gal. 1:9-10; Col. 1:28; Titus 1:13-14).
- At the same time, we commit not to be contentious with others who may have a different understanding of what the Bible teaches in matters of secondary importance. We will be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace (Titus 3:10; Eph. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).
- In addition, we affirm the authority of Scripture over our lives, and desire mutual accountability as we seek to walk in holiness, righteousness and faithfulness to Christ (Titus 2:11-12; Eph. 4:1).

Our Commitment to Worship

- We are committed to faithful and regular participation as the church gathers for worship (Heb. 10:24).
- We are committed to being worshippers, not spectators. Our commitment is to engage with heart and mind as songs are sung, as we join together in corporate prayer, as we hear God's word preached and as we come to the Lord's Table to receive communion (John 4:24; Matt. 15:8).
- We are committed to living lives of worship by presenting ourselves as bondslaves and living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1; Col. 3:23-24).
- We are committed to praying for one another as an act of worship reflecting our dependence on God (James 5:16; Col. 1:9).

Our Commitment to One Another

- We are committed to caring for the needs of others, especially those who are of the household of faith (Matt. 22:36-40; Gal. 6:10).
- We are committed to discipleship – receiving spiritual counsel, input and guidance from others (drink in) and offering spiritual counsel, input and guidance to others (pour out). (2 Tim. 2:1-2).
- We are committed to supporting those who are living with what the Bible calls *"the gift of singleness"* as they seek to live lives that honor Christ (1 Cor. 7:7-9).
- We are committed to supporting one another, to holding each other accountable and being held accountable to marital faithfulness, harmony, and the preservation of our marriage covenant (Matt. 19:3-9; Mal. 2:14-16). (Appendix B)

- We are committed to supporting one another, to holding each other accountable and being held accountable to raise our children in the nurture and discipline of the Lord (Deut. 6:4-8; Eph. 6:3).
- We are committed to the regular practice of seeking forgiveness from others when we have sinned against them, granting forgiveness to those who seek it, and pursuing peace and reconciled relationships with each other for God's glory (Eph. 4:32, Rom. 12:18).
- We are committed to living under the authority of and accountable to the leadership of this local church when corrective or restorative discipline is needed in our lives (Matt. 18:15-20). (Appendix E)
- We are committed to enjoying our freedom in Christ in a way that does not present a stumbling block to another Christian (1 Cor. 8:1-13, Gal. 5:13).

Our Commitment to the Mission of the Church

- We are committed to serving as ambassadors for Christ by faithfully representing Him and His Kingdom to people who do not know Him or have rejected Him (2 Cor. 5:17-21).
- We are committed to supporting the ministry of the local church with our prayers, our faithful service and with financial resources as God provides (2 Cor. 9:7, Phil. 4:18).
- We are committed to participating in efforts to take the gospel to the nations by going, giving and/or praying for those who have given their lives in service to missions (Matt. 28:19-20).

Regular Attenders and Church Members

At Redeemer, church membership is not required for people to be included in the life of the church. While we believe it is a good and helpful thing for people to formally declare themselves as members of a local church, all are welcome to be part of what God is doing in and through Redeemer.

A knowledge of which people are willing to publicly associate themselves with the church by becoming members assists the church leadership in planning and effectively ministering in the church.

Also, by joining Redeemer as a member, a person demonstrates in a concrete way his/her desire to unite with us to advance Christ's mission in the world. Although the church provides support and care for all who attend, the church has a special responsibility towards its members who are in need. Members also enjoy ministry opportunities and privileges that are not available to regular attenders, including the following:

- Members may participate and vote in congregational meetings, where we seek to discern and plan how to follow God's vision for our church.
- If a member needs counseling or support from our elders when their time is limited, the member's request for assistance will take precedence over requests from people who are not members of the church.
- Some teaching and leadership ministries are only open to members.
- Members who wish to make use of the church's facilities or ministries are given priority over non-members.

APPENDIX A: Doctrinal Statement

I. The Triune God:

We believe there is only one God, who has always existed and will always exist in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are co-eternal in being and nature and are co-equal in power, having the same attributes and perfections. They know, love and glorify one another. This one true and living God alone is worthy to receive all glory and adoration.

II. The Scriptures:

We believe that the sixty-six books that make up the Old and New Testaments alone constitute the word of God. The Bible is verbally inspired by God, inerrant and infallible in its original writings. It alone is authoritative on all matters pertaining to life and faith.

III. Creation and Humanity:

We believe that God created all things. He created man—male and female—in His own image, with equal worth and dignity, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with Him.

IV. The Fall:

The first man, Adam, rebelled against God and fell to Satan's temptation. All creation was affected by Adam's fall, and he and all his descendants became alienated from God and corrupted in every aspect of their being. The Bible calls this act of rebellion and disobedience "sin." As a result of Adam's sin all of his descendants are sinners, condemned to death and unable to remedy their condition. The only hope for mankind is the undeserved kindness and mercy of God, who alone can rescue them and restore their relationship with Him.

V. The Plan of God to Rescue Mankind:

We believe that before the world was created, God determined in grace to save guilty sinners from among every tribe and tongue and people and nation, through the person and work of the Son, Jesus Christ.

- He was the Messiah whom God had promised to the nation of Israel.
- In His incarnation, the Son who was fully God also became fully man, being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin named Mary.
- He lived a perfect, sinless life, fulfilling the law of God. In doing so, He satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf.
- He was unjustly put to death by crucifixion. His death on the cross paid the price for sin, bore the wrath of God and satisfied God's righteous demand. By bearing the full penalty for the sins of all who would believe in Him, Jesus reconciled sinful men to God.

- On the third day following His crucifixion, Jesus physically rose from the dead. In doing so, He was vindicated by His Father, broke the power of death, defeated Satan and brought everlasting life to all His people.
- Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven where, seated at the right hand of God the Father, He reigns forever as Lord.

This plan of God is the "good news" – the gospel. By God's grace, through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, men are restored to right relationship with God. This faith consists of repenting of sin and believing the gospel. Salvation is God's gracious gift and cannot be earned. It is found in no one or in nothing else. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man.

At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ. Redeemed sinners have the infinite privilege of glorifying God because of what He has accomplished. Although people are made right with God the moment they place their faith in Christ, the gospel is not something that is believed once and then ignored. It is something that is believed and lived out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts and in our church to proceed from and be related to the work of Christ on the cross.

VI. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit:

We believe it is the Holy Spirit who makes it possible for people to respond to the gospel. He brings spiritual life to those who have been spiritually dead, awakening them to repentance and faith. At the same time, He begins to live in the believer, guiding, instructing, empowering, and producing Christ-like characteristics in his life. He sovereignly and graciously gives spiritual gifts to believers, enabling them to serve one another.

VII. The Kingdom of God:

We believe that all who have been saved by God are forever secure in their new status as citizens of the Kingdom of God, which is already present but has not yet been fully realized. Their allegiance is to Him as their King, Lord and Master. They desire to trust, obey and glorify their King. Living as light in a dark world, believers should not withdraw into seclusion from the world. Nor should they become indistinguishable from it. Rather, Christians are to love their neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. These good works (loving and serving others) provide indispensable evidence that a person's heart has been truly changed by God and that Christ is his King.

VIII. The Church:

We believe that all who have been saved by God become His adopted children. As a result, all believers are members of His family and are united together with one another. Believers are instructed by God's word to meet with other believers regularly for corporate worship, prayer, for the preaching of God's word and for the practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a public declaration of one's faith in Christ and desire for association with the family of God, while the Lord's Supper is an ongoing reminder of our relationship with God and with each other. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are meant to signify and remind us of the finished work of Christ on the cross and of His resurrection.

IX. The Restoration of All Things:

We believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth at the end of this age – personally, gloriously and bodily. At that time, He will judge the just and the unjust. Those who refused to repent and believe the gospel will experience eternal, conscious punishment in hell. Those who have repented of their sins and trusted in Christ alone for salvation will experience eternal blessedness and joy in His presence in heaven. In that final state, all things that were corrupted by the fall will be renewed and restored. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, and all things will be put under Jesus Christ who will hand over all things to God the Father.

APPENDIX A: Constitution

Preamble

In order to conduct the affairs of this church in a way that honors Christ, the Lord of the Church, we set forth this Constitution to guide us as we serve Him and one another. We voluntarily submit ourselves to this Constitution.

Article I – Name

This organization shall be known as Redeemer Community Church, Inc.

Article II – Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify God. We glorify Him by proclaiming and living out the gospel; by loving and worshipping God, loving and serving one another in the church, and loving and serving our community and our world. Our response to the gospel as a church is to share the message of Christ with unbelievers, and to encourage believers to grow in grace and to serve Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our focus will always be to exalt His name and His word.

Article III – Doctrinal Statement

The Doctrinal Statement of Redeemer Community Church is the published statement as of September 1, 2009.

Article IV – Church Government

The church acknowledges only the Lord Jesus Christ as its Head, the Holy Spirit as its Teacher; and the Holy Scriptures as its only infallible guide in matters of faith and practice, church order and discipline. The church is not accountable to nor under the jurisdiction or supervision of any other church body or denomination.

A. Church Leadership

The leadership of this church shall consist of elders and deacons (I Tim. 3:1-13). The government of this church, under the authority of the Chief Shepherd and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, shall be vested in the Board of Elders. The approval of additional elders and deacons will be the responsibility of the Board of Elders. If at any time the number of elders becomes fewer than two, the deacons shall serve as interim elders along with the remaining elder until such time as two or more elders are functioning in the office of elder.

1. Responsibilities

a. Elders

Elders are responsible to lead, feed, guard and guide the church. As those who must give an account to God (Acts 20:28-31; Heb. 13:17), they shall exercise oversight over the church in all its ministries and spiritual functions, including the ministry of the word, the Lord's Table, baptisms, and any other functions they deem useful and edifying. When necessary, they are responsible for the exercise of church discipline as taught in Matt. 18:15-17. In situations of dispute over any matter, the decision of the elders will be final.

Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures, particularly as in such passages as I Peter 5:1-3 and Hebrews 13:7, 17. They are not immune from correction as prescribed in Matt. 18: 15-17, and are open to rebuke as taught in 1 Tim. 5:19-20.

Each year, immediately prior to the annual business meeting, each Elder will be asked to reaffirm in writing his support of the Redeemer Community Church *Doctrinal Statement*. (Appendix A)

Elders shall serve for an indefinite period of time.

b. Deacons

The elders shall determine the responsibilities which are to be carried out by the deacons. These areas may include, but are not limited to, the administration of the church property, maintenance, finances, record keeping, the physical activities of the church in order to facilitate worship and ministries and the oversight of the ministries of compassion within the church family and in the community.

It is critical that the deacons regularly communicate with the elders about needs within the body so that elders and deacons can respond together to meet those needs.

Their duties are to be discharged with spiritual grace in cooperation with and submission to the elders so that the elders can give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

2. Qualifications

a. Elders

Any man desiring the office of Elder must evidence the personal, domestic, leadership, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. An Elder shall have been a member of the church and a visible part of the body for a period of at least one year before being eligible to be placed in nomination.

b. Deacons

Any man desiring the office of deacon must evidence the personal, domestic, leadership, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. A deacon shall have been a member of the church and a visible part of the body for a period of at least one year before being eligible to be placed in nomination.

3. Nomination and Selection

a. Elders

At least once a year, before the end of September, the elders should ask the members of the church to prayerfully consider nominating qualified men as prospective new elders. Any man who desires to serve as an Elder and sees himself as qualified is welcome to place his own name in nomination.

Within 30 days from receiving a nomination, the elders will meet to discuss the men whose names have been put into nomination. At that point, at least two of the elders will meet with each nominee to determine if he desires to serve and to help him evaluate whether he meets the qualifications for service.

1.1. If the nominee is not interested in serving or does not meet the biblical qualifications for service, his nomination will not move forward.

1.2. If the nominee is interested in serving and does meet the biblical qualifications for service, he will meet with the entire Board of elders and with unanimous approval, his nomination will go forward.

The elders will present to the entire body on at least two consecutive Sundays the name of each qualified man who desires to serve. During that period, any church member who has concerns about the nominee's qualifications should bring those concerns first to the nominee with a view toward clarification or reconciliation. If the person taking the concern to the nominee is not reconciled or satisfied with the nominee's qualifications at that point he or she should then take any concerns to the full Board of Elders. The elders will determine whether the concerns raised disqualify the man from serving as an Elder.

If no concerns are raised about an Elder candidate, or once any concerns have been satisfactorily resolved, the elders, with unanimous agreement, will present to the body the newly appointed Elder.

b. Deacons

The elders will determine the need for deacons. When needed, deacons shall be selected for service using the same procedure as given for the selection of elders.

4. Resignation/Dismissal/Leave of Absence

a. Elders

The resignation of an elder should be submitted in writing to the Board of Elders.

The Board of Elders may, after following what is outlined in Matt. 18:15-17 and by a unanimous vote of the Board, dismiss from his position an elder who no longer meets the biblical qualifications to serve.

An elder may request a leave of absence. Following his leave of absence, when he is ready to rejoin the Board, he will be reinstated by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders.

b. Deacons

The resignation of a Deacon should follow the same pattern as stated for the resignation of an Elder.

5. Church Staff

The elders may, at their discretion and with input from the deacons, determine if paid staff positions are needed for the church to be able to operate effectively and may hire people to fill those positions.

The elders may, at their discretion, delegate responsibility for hiring, supervising, evaluating and terminating non-pastoral church staff.

The elders may, at their discretion and with input from the deacons, decide to hire a man for a pastoral position. Such a man should meet the qualifications outlined for an Elder and should attend Elder meetings as ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board of Elders.

A paid staff member will not be set apart to serve in leadership until he has served the church for an extended season. Upon the unanimous approval of the Board of Elders, he may be set apart for service in leadership following the process identified herein. At that time, he will participate fully in his duties unless some matter under consideration pertains directly or specifically to him (such as salary, benefits, or other matters related to employment).

6. Voting

Each elder has one vote in conducting the business of the church. Under normal circumstances, the Board of Elders should seek a unanimous vote on any decision. If there is no unanimity initially on an issue, the matter shall be tabled until the following elders' meeting(s) to allow for more prayer and discussion. After such time, if unanimity still does not exist, a three-fourths vote shall settle the matter unless a unanimous vote is required by this *Constitution* to settle the issue at hand.

7. Leadership Meetings

a. Elders

The elders shall be diligent and faithful in attendance in regular and special elders' meetings, regular church services, and other church events.

Normally, elders should meet at least twice per month.

The Board of Elders shall annually elect from its membership a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary. Paid staff members of the Board of Elders shall not be eligible to serve as Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Trustee or church Treasurer.

b. Deacons

Deacons shall be diligent and faithful in attendance in meetings, regular church services, and other church events.

B. Finance

Stewardship of the Lord's assets is a serious concern for God's church. To facilitate management of these assets, a Treasurer shall be appointed by the Board of Elders and shall serve under its supervision. He or she must be a member of the church. The Treasurer shall be responsible for deposits, disbursements, accounting records, and shall provide input on establishing and executing the budget.

1. Deposits

Offerings shall be deposited weekly by the Treasurer or the Treasurer's designated representative with particular attention to proper internal control for all offerings.

2. Disbursements

Checks over a designated amount shall require two authorized signatures and will be prepared in a timely manner by the Treasurer or the Treasurer's designated representative to meet the financial obligations of the church. Each year in January, the elders shall stipulate the amount that will require two signatures.

3. Accounting Records

Accounting will be maintained by the Treasurer in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. Financial statements will be provided monthly to the Board of Elders and to members in good standing upon request. An audit of the church's financial records shall be performed annually and shall be conducted as instructed by the Board of Elders.

4. Budgets

An annual budget will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Elders. This budget will be used as a guide for expenditures during the current budget year.

Article V – Membership

A. Application for Membership

Persons desiring to unite with Redeemer Community Church must have a profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. They will be interviewed by at least two elders as to their basis for salvation and Christian experience. They must be able to give assent to the church's *Doctrinal Statement* and *Constitution* as well as to their responsibilities towards this local assembly in accordance with the New Testament and as spelled out in the **Starting Point** document. Concerns over any of these matters must be appropriately addressed prior to admittance into membership.

B. Admittance to Membership

Once applicants for membership have been through the membership process, the full Board of Elders will meet to accept the applicants into membership. They will be presented to the congregation and welcomed as members in a public meeting.

C. Termination of Membership

Individuals may be released from this covenant of membership in the following ways:

1. By Written Request

Individuals may request that their name be removed from the membership roll by submitting a letter to the Board of Elders in accordance with the Redeemer Community Church membership documents.

2. By Dismissal

Individuals abstaining from the functions of this local assembly for an extended period of time without understandable circumstances shall be considered for dismissal. An attempt will be made to contact them in person, by letter, or by e-mail. After due examination and approval by the Board of Elders, such persons will be removed from membership.

3. By Exclusion

Individuals disqualifying themselves from association with this local church because of moral, ethical, or doctrinal reasons shall be excluded from the membership of this church by the disciplinary action of the Board of Elders in accordance with the Redeemer Community Church member covenant.

4. By Death

D. Restoration

Individuals who have been removed from membership can be restored in accordance with provisions spelled out in the Redeemer Community Church member covenant.

E. Rights and Responsibilities of the Membership

See Redeemer Community Church membership documents.

Article VI – Congregational Meetings

The primary purpose of congregational meetings is for communication. The elders will call and conduct all congregational meetings whenever necessary to communicate matters to the church.

Congregational meetings will be for the membership of the church. At the discretion of the Board of Elders, consensus or affirmation of the membership may be sought to determine the mind of the congregation. Open and free discussion should be encouraged in meetings (keeping appropriate

issues of unity, respect and love of the members in mind). Authority for final decisions for the church will reside with the Board of Elders.

Visitors may attend but are not eligible for any consensus or affirmation on the issues concerning the church and its membership.

Article VII – Property Rights and Business Transactions

This church shall have the power to rent, lease, purchase, own and sell real property in its own name. The membership shall not have any equity in the real property of the church or rights to vote on its disposal.

In the event of dissolution, all assets shall first be used to dispose of all church-related liabilities.

To the extent that assets exceed liabilities, the remaining assets shall be divided proportionately among the mission organizations supported by Redeemer Community Church, based on the church's donations or gifts given to those mission organizations during the last 12 calendar months prior to dissolution.

The Board of Elders will officially appoint at least three Trustees to conduct business matters and sign obligatory legal documents on behalf of and binding upon the church. The actions of the Trustees legally bind and obligate the church regarding any and all engagements, financial, or otherwise, including: purchases, sales covenants, notes, leases, legal documents, and/or other obligatory business documents, transactions, or any other matters, all of which must be approved by the Board of Elders. Trustees may be added or removed from their capacity as Trustee at any time by the Board of Elders. However, any obligation engaged in by the Trustees during their tenure continues to be binding upon the church for the duration of the obligation.

For all covenant or obligatory business matters requiring official documentation, the concurrent signatures of two Trustees are required to consummate all business.

The church will legally indemnify and provide insurance to protect the leadership, officers, trustees, staff, and workers against legal liability and lawsuit.

Article VIII – Missionaries and Missions Organizations

All missionaries and mission organizations supported by the church shall align with the current *Missions Policy* of Redeemer Community Church. All missionaries and mission organizations requesting or obtaining support from Redeemer Community Church shall be approved by the Missions Committee and the Board of Elders.

Article IX – Conflict Resolution

Redeemer Community Church is committed to resolving conflicts in a biblical manner. See Matthew 5:9, John 17:20-23, Romans 12:18, Ephesians 4:1-3 and the current Redeemer Community Church statement on Relational Commitments.

A. Members

When a member of this church has a conflict or concern about the behavior of another member, at the request of either party to the dispute, the church shall make every effort to assist in resolving

their differences and having their relationship reconciled in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the current statement on Relational Commitments.

B. Members and Leadership

Should a majority of church members come to a point where they believe the Board of Elders is no longer fulfilling its biblical responsibilities for oversight of the church, after repeated efforts to resolve the conflict according to the current statement on Relational Commitments, the elders must call for a church-wide meeting to publicly address those concerns. If the concerns cannot be resolved in that setting, the concerned members and the elders will submit themselves to outside binding arbitration from Peacemaker Ministries or an organization using the rules of arbitration established by Peacemaker Ministries to resolve the conflict and to reestablish the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

C. Doctrine and Discipline

Conflicts involving doctrine or church discipline will be addressed by the Board of Elders with a view toward correction and reconciliation.

D. Employees

Employment disputes shall be resolved according to the procedures set forth in the personnel policy of the church. If the church does not have a written policy, the Board of Elders shall make the final decision.

Article X – Amendments

This *Constitution* may be amended, modified, or rescinded by a two-thirds vote of the membership of the church.

APPENDIX B: Commitment to Preserving Marriages

They are no longer two but one flesh.

What therefore God has joined together let not man separate. (Matt. 19:6)

God has established marriage as a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman who share a common commitment to Christ (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-15). He designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create a stable setting for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

God delights in unity and harmony in relationships (Phil. 2:1-2; John 17:21). Because we are sinners, we experience conflict in marriage (James 4:1-2).

God's desire is for us to honor our marriage covenant and to pursue unity through humility, confession of sin, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. (Eph. 4:32-5:2). As we do, we demonstrate the power of the gospel to bring reconciliation and restore love.

As a church, we are committed to building strong marriages and to helping couples pursue reconciliation and peace when conflict occurs.

God wants our marriages to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Divorce distorts that picture. God hates divorce because of what it says about the power of the gospel to bring reconciliation and peace. He gave His Son as a sacrifice to reconcile the broken relationship between Him and us. We reflect His glory and His goodness when we sacrifice to pursue peace and reconciliation in our relationships.

God also hates divorce because He loves us and wants to keep us from the pain and bitterness that can follow. He also hates divorce because of the impact it has on children.

But God does not hate those who have experienced divorce, and divorce is not an unforgiveable sin. We live in community with each other as men and women in equal need of God's forgiving grace in our lives. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

This document is designed to outline how we will live in community with each other to help strengthen and preserve our marriages as we uphold God's design.

1. As a church, we will seek to support and strengthen marriages.
 - a. We will preach and teach from the Scriptures regarding marriage.
 - b. We will encourage couples to participate with other couples in community groups as a way to nurture their marriages.
 - c. We will provide biblical counsel and support for couples who are facing marital struggles.
2. As a church, we will apply the following principles as we seek to help couples in marital conflict.

- a. When conflict occurs in a marriage relationship, our goal should always be to move toward each other, not away from each other (Eph. 4:1-3; Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:18).
 - b. The pursuit of unity begins with humility. Conflict comes when selfishness is stirred up in us. Peace and unity come when we count our spouse as more significant than our self. (Phil. 2:3-4).
 - c. God has given us His word and His Holy Spirit so that we will learn how to address the sins in our own heart that are keeping us from loving each other well.
3. While there are circumstances in a marriage that allow for divorce as an option for Christians, our desire as followers of Jesus should always be for forgiveness and reconciliation (Eph. 4:31-32; 1 Pet. 3:8-12) and for the preservation of the marriage covenant (Mal. 2:14-16). As a church, we will encourage one another to submit to what God's word teaches regarding divorce.⁴
 - a. Divorce is an allowable option (but not a requirement) for a Christian when a spouse decisively and physically deserts the relationship; commits unrepentant adultery; or is guilty of unrepentant life-endangerment (1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:11).
 - b. Even when there has been adultery, life endangerment or when an unbeliever has abandoned a spouse, God commands us to demonstrate mercy, kindness and love toward our spouse (Luke 6:27-28, Rom. 12:14).
 - c. A person who initiates a divorce without biblical grounds and without pursuing reconciliation gives evidence that he or she may not be a believer (1 Cor. 7:10-11; 2 Cor. 13:5).
 - d. A believer who initiates a divorce (where there are biblical grounds) should not be motivated by anger, bitterness, wrath or hatred. Instead, he or she should be motivated by practical concerns about welfare (1 Tim. 5:8) and should maintain a desire to continue to pursue reconciliation and ultimately, a restored marriage relationship (2 Cor. 5:16-21).
 - e. A believer who believes that he or she has biblical grounds for divorce and that a divorce is necessary for protection should seek wise, godly counsel from church leaders before initiating a divorce (Prov. 15:22).
 - f. Separated spouses who are moving toward divorce, but are still legally married, should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with being married.
 - g. After extended periods of separation, alienation, or even after a divorce has occurred, reconciliation can happen. This should be our hope and our pursuit (Hosea 2:14-23).
4. As a church, we will encourage one another to submit to what God's word teaches regarding remarriage.
 - a. Regardless of a person's past, God desires that the person would honor the covenant he or she is currently in (1 Cor. 7:17-24).
 - b. Since death breaks the marriage bond (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39), remarriage is permissible without sin for a believing widow or widower, if the marriage is with another believer.
 - c. We are always interested in helping divorced people reconcile and be restored in their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate.
 - d. A believer who is divorced and has not remarried should desire to see his covenant relationships reestablished for as long as that possibility remains open as an option.

- e. If, after serious efforts have been made toward reconciliation, a divorced spouse together with the leadership of the church concludes that the marriage cannot be restored, the divorced spouse may pursue remarriage to a new spouse. This assumes the divorced spouse and the church leadership have come to the mutually agreed upon decision that the divorced spouse meets the biblical qualifications for remarriage. Serious consideration must be given to the fact that this cuts off all possibility of reconciliation to a former spouse.
- f. A believer is not obligated to remarry simply because the former spouse is willing to remarry. There may be a need for time and counsel before a remarriage occurs.
- g. If remarriage is not possible because an ex-spouse has already remarried another person, the believer should continue to pursue a peaceful, grace-filled relationship with an ex-spouse, while honoring the ex-spouse's new marriage covenant.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace, and forgiveness. He cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does our church. God also graciously extends His love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves Him (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done what the Scripture requires by seeking to reconcile broken relationships.

APPENDIX C: Commitment to Caring for Our Children

The prudent sees danger and hides himself. (Prov. 27:12)

Children are a blessing from God, and He calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a place of safety and blessing for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen at Redeemer Community Church, but we are committed to taking reasonable precautions to protect our children and youth from foreseeable harm.

If a child or youth is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, and to hold offending workers fully responsible for their actions.

APPENDIX D: Commitment to Biblical Counseling & Confidentiality

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. (Rom. 15:14)

Our goal in providing biblical counseling is that we may “*present everyone mature in Christ*” (Col.1:28). We believe that the Bible is God-inspired guidance, instruction, and power for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Therefore, our counseling relies on biblical teachings and principles applied with “all wisdom” through the Holy Spirit to each situation we counsel. We are committed to asking the question, “What does Scripture say regarding this matter?” and to counseling in the light of the response to this question.

We believe that Christ has equipped His body, the church, to provide wisdom, knowledge, and instruction to one another (Rom. 15:14) in order for each member to live a godly and holy life, pleasing God in all ways. Christ has also equipped His church with spiritually mature leaders who are able to shepherd, lead, teach, and counsel others (Heb. 5:11-14) in the church.

Though the educational and experiential background of each leader who counsels at RCC is unique, the essential training and practice for all leaders who counsel at RCC centers around their ability to apply Scripture to the situation they are counseling. For this reason, those who counsel for RCC do not present themselves as psychotherapists nor mental health professionals but as biblical counselors.

In order to avoid misunderstandings regarding the role of leaders in the church that provide “spiritual counsel,” the following clarifications should be kept in mind.

1. Leaders who provide spiritual counsel may also be trained in other areas of life that are outside of the realm of providing spiritual counsel. Thus, if a doctor provides “spiritual counsel” through the church, we understand that this is separate from his providing “medical counsel” at his clinic.
2. God calls the leaders in His church to set an example “in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). If any leader should not live up to this standard in any counseling situation, the counselee should report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.
3. Confidentiality is a principal factor in establishing a relationship to receive spiritual counsel. The leader providing spiritual counsel will keep confidentiality except in the following situations:
 - a. when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);
 - b. when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20);
 - c. when leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).

When counseling is requested a leader may seek to have a second counselor involved. A man will not counsel a woman alone. Providing spiritual counsel requires a relationship between the leader and the counselee.

Occasionally there may arise a misunderstanding between the counselor and the counselee. We will seek to handle these misunderstandings in a biblical way. This includes being willing to submit to legally binding arbitration, rather than filing a lawsuit, and not attempting to require a "spiritual counselor" to appear in court or to provide his notes.

Our desire is to provide wise, spiritual, godly counsel to each person in our church. By sharing these guidelines, we hope the biblical counseling offered at RCC will help many become "mature in Christ."

APPENDIX E: Commitment to Accountability & Church Discipline

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. (Heb. 10:24).

A. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love

God has established the church to reflect His character, wisdom, and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11). He demonstrates His love for His church in that He sent His Son to die for her (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 5:25). His purpose for His church is to present her as a gift to His Son; thus, Scripture refers to the church as the "bride" of Christ (Rev. 19:7). For this reason, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12).

Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

We sometimes refer to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as "discipline." The Bible does not present church discipline as negative, legalistic, or harsh. True discipline originates from God Himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. "The Lord disciplines the one he loves" (Heb. 12:6). "Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law" (Ps. 94:12). "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline" (Rev. 3:19).

God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive, and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as "formative discipline," involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship, and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On rare occasions, God's discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, He corrects us. One way He does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track. This process, which is sometimes called "corrective" or "restorative" discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray (Matt. 18:12-13).

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful, or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Pet. 2:12).

B. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal, and Informal

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. *"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control"* (2 Tim. 1:7; cf. Gal. 5:23). Thus, discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks Him in prayer, and draws on His grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. This is why the Bible says, *"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness"* (Gal. 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior, or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Prov. 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. *"If he will not listen, take one or two others along"* (Matt. 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday School teacher, church leader, or elder. If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called "formal discipline."

C. Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church

If a member persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to *"tell it to the church"* (Matt. 18:17). This first involves informing one or more church pastors/elders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our elders will approach the member privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover. We intend to give the member every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the member recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our elders may accelerate the disciplinary process and move to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).⁵

As the disciplinary process progresses, our elders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including, but not limited to, private and public admonition, withholding of the Lord's Supper, removal from office, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removal from membership (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If the straying member does not repent in response to private appeals from our elders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior. This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday School class, or the entire congregation if our elders deem it to be appropriate⁶ (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20).

If, after a reasonable period of time, the member still refuses to change, then our elders will bring the situation before the congregation, with the recommendation that the member be removed from membership and normal fellowship. The congregation will be advised to treat the member as an unbeliever and seek his salvation.

This means that we will no longer treat the member as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the member, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to him or her, remind him or her of God's holiness and mercy, and call him or her to repent and put his or her faith in Christ (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. Therefore, we waive our right to withdraw from membership or accountability while discipline is pending against us. Although we are free to stop attending the church at any time, we agree that a withdrawal while discipline is pending will not stop the process of discipline until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage our repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matt. 18:12-14; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 13:17).

If a member leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our elders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the member to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the member find freedom from his or her sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members⁷ (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If a member repents, and our elders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14).

People who have been disciplined by another church will not be allowed to become members at Redeemer until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, or our elders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we intend to hold fast to the promise of Scripture: *"He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"* (Heb. 12:10-11).

¹ For a more detailed unpacking of each point, see pp. 58-71 in the workbook for the video series “Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything”

² This material is adapted from Peacemaker Ministries. For more information, go to www.hispeace.org

³ Paul David Tripp, from the audio series “Your Walk With God Is A Community Project”

⁴ Bible teachers throughout the ages have disagreed on how to interpret some key passages relating to divorce and remarriage. We respect the views of those who disagree with our understanding of these passages, and will continue to listen carefully to these other views as we seek to grow in our understanding

⁵ For example, it is not uncommon for a person to attend a church, develop relationships of trust, persuade people to give him money to invest, and then fail to return the money as promised. When such sinful men are discovered, they may leave the church, but continue to prey on members who have not heard about their schemes. If our leaders found such a man in our church, they would call him to repent and confess his wrongs. If he refused, they would bring him under formal discipline, and warn the congregation not to trust him with their money.

⁶ If our leaders inform our entire congregation about a disciplinary situation, they have discretion whether to divulge the member’s name. This decision usually will depend on a variety of factors, such as how widely known the situation already is, whether there might be people in the congregation who could persuade the member to repent, or whether the congregation needs to be on guard against potential harm he or she might cause (see previous footnote). Even if our leaders decide it is not necessary to identify a member specifically, they may still inform the congregation of the general situation and the disciplinary steps they have followed. This general information can help warn people who may be flirting with secret sin that they, too, may face discipline if they do not turn back to God.

⁷ For example, if we confronted a man in our church for seducing young women, or for acting inappropriately around little children, or for sowing gossip and division, and he left and started attending another church, we would consider it our duty to urge the leaders of that church to counsel with him and to protect their people from his harmful behavior.



Membership Application

Please complete this form before your scheduled membership interview.

Name (Last, First, MI)			Name you go by (<i>optional</i>)	
Birthdate (MM/DD/YYYY)	Contact Phone No <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell	Previously Baptized? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Marital Status <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed	
Name of Spouse			Anniversary Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	
Home Address		City	State	Zip
Place of Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to be included in Redeemer's Online Church Directory. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to receive Redeemer's weekly email newsletter. My email address is: _____			
Name of church previously attended		City	State	

List below the names of family members in your current household. Use separate sheet of paper, if needed.

Name	Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	Baptized?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

During your interview, you will be asked to answer the following five questions:

- 1) Do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and its teaching of salvation through Christ alone, to be the only true teaching of salvation?
- 2) Can you honestly admit that you hate your sin, and that in humility before God you trust only in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and not in yourself or in any other work?
- 3) Do you desire, through God's grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to serve Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, by putting your sinful nature to death, forsaking the world's sin, and leading a godly life?
- 4) Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the biblically ordained leadership of this church, and in case you are found both sinful and unrepentant in teaching, understanding, or life action, to accept loving Biblical discipline for the goal of joyful restoration?
- 5) Do you agree with the Doctrinal Statement and Constitution of Redeemer Community Church?

God calls people in different ways. From your personal experience, describe how you came to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Use a separate sheet of paper, if needed.

How would you describe your ministry gifts and interests? In what areas of ministry would you be interested in serving? Use a separate sheet of paper, if needed.

Is there anything we can do to minister to you now? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please explain.

Are you currently attending a Small Group? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, who is the leader? _____

If you have any questions about this application or about any other aspect of church membership, please make a note of them so we can discuss them during your membership interview.

Please read carefully and sign below.

It is my desire to be a Covenant Member of Redeemer Community Church.

With my signature below, I affirm my belief in the historic tenants of the Christian faith, as presented in Redeemer Community Church's *Doctrinal Statement* (Appendix A).

Additionally, I have read and desire to live in accordance with the following:

Check Here	Commitment Statements	Starting Point
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to be Members of One Another	Pages 14-16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to Preserving Marriages	Appendix B, Page 28
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to Caring for Our Children	Appendix C, Page 30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to Biblical Counseling & Confidentiality	Appendix D, Page 31
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to Accountability & Church Discipline	Appendix E, Page 33

Your Signature below X	Name (PLEASE PRINT) 	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Elder and/or Deacon Signature X	Name (PLEASE PRINT) 	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Elder Signature X	Name (PLEASE PRINT) 	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)