

DEFINING CHURCH PARTNERSHIP

Redemption Church exists to be witnesses of God's new world in the midst of this world that is passing away (Acts 1.8; 1 John 2.17). This newly formed people empowered by the Holy Spirit shape their lives together around the Messiah to be signs and a foretaste of the coming world. Therefore, every follower of Jesus must live out their faith together in local expressions of God's family. In other words, investing your life in a local church is what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

Even though church partnership is nowhere explicitly commanded in the New Testament, the commitment of God's people to God and one another is implicit throughout. God made us his covenant people who the Holy Spirit has sealed together as one. The church knew how many people were being added to their number (Acts 2.37-47). They kept a record of names within the church (Romans 16.1-16). The Apostles wrote their New Testament letters to the churches, not individuals. There was an implicit understanding that the church belonged to one another.

Church partnership formalizes what has already been done to us. The church is the new covenant community that pursues God, one another, and mission in the context of a local expression of Jesus' church. Church partnership, then, is the covenantal commitment to God and to each other to live out our shared life in Jesus in the context of a local church.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH PARTNERSHIP

Paul describes the church as a body with the people of God being the individual parts that make up the body, each person fulfilling their role for the proper functioning of the body. Every part is integral the health of the body (1 Cor 12.12-31). Peter portrays the church as a temple, with each person being living-stones of the structure (1 Pet 2.3-7). We are all a piece of the true temple of the presence of God on earth.

The Spirit of God equips every member with gifts and abilities to strengthen the church and its witness. There are up-front and behind-the-scenes gifts. There are serving and speaking gifts. There are a wide array of gifts. But, every part is indispensable to the vitality of the body. The gifts God gave us are not confined to the Sunday gathering but, instead, are to be used to encourage and build up God's people throughout the week.

Church partnership is different from church membership. Membership in our culture connotes paying dues to be a part of something for unique benefits and privileges. This is not the way of the church. The church partners together using the varied giftings the Spirit has equipped us with to fulfill Jesus' mission. We are all in this together. We all work together as a family to be witnesses of God's new world in the everyday stuff of life. Church partnership is participation in the Good News of Jesus.

Covenant partnership in Redemption Church demands more than attending Sunday gatherings, or going to a few meetings a year. It requires sacrificially giving yourself to Jesus and his people. We hold church partnership in high regard as we endeavor to participate in God's story by living out identities as a family of servant missionaries as we gather, go, give, and grow together.

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God has sovereignly arranged this body giving everyone honor in their respective roles. When we recognize we all need each other, there will be no division in our church, and we will all have equal care and concern for one another. We will be a family that serves and loves our brothers and sisters.

THE PEOPLE OF CHURCH PARTNERSHIP

The church not only covenants to one another but also the elders. They submit to the elders who watch over the church's souls and give an account to God for them (1 Cor 13.17). They submit themselves to the church's discipline, where after persistent unrepentant sin, a person will be disciplined out of the church's life. This is done lovingly with the hope that genuine repentance will result (1 Cor 5).

The covenant also entrusts the elders to uphold their responsibilities to the church. The elders covenant to lead you in God's mission by equipping you to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4.11-13). The elders will pray for, guide, protect, and love the church. They will seek to serve with great joy as they follow the Chief Shepherd--Jesus (1 Pet 5.1-4).

Covenant partnership with Redemption Church is a joint commitment of the entire body to a way of life around Jesus and his mission. As each partner participates through gathering, going, giving, and growing our church will become a true outpost for the Kingdom of God

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Are there any requirements for becoming a covenant partner?

The only requirements are to be a baptized follower of Jesus seeking to live out your faith in the context of God's people. We do ask individuals to go through a foundations class to familiarize themselves with the doctrine and practices of Redemption Church. Becoming a covenant partner with Redemption should be a serious decision that has been prayed and thought deeply through. There is no time requirement, but we generally find that it takes about 6 months to begin understanding who we are as a church and for individuals to jump into our everyday lives.

- Is there an age limit for covenant partnership?

There is no age limit for becoming a covenant partner, as long as one meets the requirements for partnership. Children under the age of 18 are able to participate under the parents oversight. Again, it is vital that one understands our theological practices and lives them out in their everyday lives.

- Why can't I lead or serve if I am not a partner?

The church is a family, a committed group of people to one another. Anyone in leadership must be committed and covenanted to the family. In order to protect our family, the elders refrain from putting non-covenanted people into leadership positions, working with our children, and some other ministry positions.

- **Why do we sign the covenant every year?**

We sign our church covenant every September for several reasons. Practically, we use it as covenant renewal ceremony. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel would undergo regular covenant renewal ceremonies in order to remind themselves and recommit to God's law. At Redemption, we find it highly beneficial to remind ourselves of who we are and what God has called us to do on an annual basis. Pragmatically, it enables people to leave if they are not in agreement with our doctrine or practices after a year. It also allows the elders to regularly know who they are responsible for caring for, protecting, leading, and feeding.

- **What if I want to become a covenant partner in the middle of the year?**

People who want to join after our yearly renewal services in September are free to do so. One may sign the covenant anytime of the year. However, they should know that every September they will be asked to sign the covenant again.

- **How do I know if church leadership is upholding their covenant commitments?**

The elders will seek to inform the church of its direction and decisions through Sunday morning gatherings and special meetings. However, we also encourage partners to ask the elders any question they might have about the doctrine or practices of the church. We have open book policies regarding our finances and our meetings. If you have a concern or a question, please talk to an elder.

- **What is church discipline, and why should I "sign up" for it?**

Paul commands that the church should discipline its partners that refuse to repent and conform to the life of Christ. Rather than viewing this as a mean act full of bigotry and hatred, Paul infers that it should be as the most loving thing one can do. The goal of discipline--removing one from the covenant partnership and not fellowshiping with them-- is always restoration. It is the salvation of the brother or sister. Paul says we are to hand this person over to Satan to come to his senses and return to Christ. Therefore, every follower of Jesus should desire, if they live in unrepentant sin, church discipline so that their faith may not be shipwrecked.

LEADERSHIP COVENANT TO REDEMPTION CHURCH

Redemption Church's elders are entrusted with leading, feeding, protecting, and caring for God's people for God's missional purposes. As such, all of our elders covenant with God, the other elders, and with the church the following:

- To ordain elders and appoint deacons and leaders according to the Bible's criteria for such offices (1Tim 3.1-12; Titus 1.5-9; 1Pet 5.1-4).
- To prayerfully seek God's will for our church family and to steward resources to the best of our ability, based on the Bible and prayerful leading of God the Spirit (Acts 20.28; 1Pet 5.1-4).
- To shepherd our church family and individuals within it, as gospel-centered disciples, family, missionaries, in truth and love and seeing all things as worship (Rom 12.1; Matt 28.16-20; Eph. 4.15-16; Col 1.28; James 5.14; 1Pet 5.1-4).
- To faithfully preach and teach the Bible, and to give advice and counsel based in Scripture (Acts 20.27-28; 1Tim 4.16; 2Tim 4.1-5; Titus 2.1)
- To faithfully equip the body to carry out the work of ministry (Eph. 4.11-16)
- To protect against false teachers and false teaching (Matt 7.15; Acts 20.28-31; 1Tim 1.3-7; 1John 4.1)
- To exercise discipline – in love – when necessary, pursuing first the glory of God, then the good of the disciplined one and the health of the church as a whole (Matt 18.15-20; 1Cor. 5; Gal 6.1; James 5.19-20).
- To set an example for you to follow, and to join with our covenant members in fulfilling the obligations of covenant members, stated below (Phil 3.17; 1Tim 4.12; Titus 2.7-8; 1Pet 5.3).

PARTNERS COVENANT WITH REDEMPTION CHURCH

As God's redeemed children saved by free grace through faith in Jesus alone, we strive to live by the Spirit as a family of servant missionaries. We seek to embody and enact God's missional story together in our cities to display God's new creation. The covenant is not a legalistic code to follow. It is meant to shape our lives together to become more faithful disciples, a loving family, and true missionaries.

As covenant partners together, we commit to God, one another, and ourselves the following everyday rhythms of life:

Gather:

- I will pursue meeting with God's people in the Sunday gathering (Heb 10.25).
- I will gather and participate in the life and rhythms of a missional community (Acts 2.42-27).
- I will seek out other forms of godly encouragement with God's people (Heb 10.24).
- I will submit myself to the loving discipline of the church for my benefit (1 Cor. 5).

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Go:

- I will endeavor to give witness to Jesus and his resurrection in word and deed both in my daily life and with God's people. I am sent out into every arena of my life: family, vocation, and recreation. I am a sent son or daughter, who brings the Good News of Jesus everywhere I go (Acts 1.8; John 20.21; Matt 28.18-20; Phil 2.12-13).
- I will commit to pray for those who do not know Jesus to be transferred from darkness into light (Col 1.14-15).

Give:

- I will seek to steward and give my resources for the benefit of the Kingdom of God (2 Cor 8.9; 9.7).
- I will use the Spiritual abilities I have been given to build up the church throughout the week (1 Cor 12; 1 Pet 4.10-11).

Grow:

- I will seek to grow in my daily walk with Jesus through the disciplines of Scripture and Prayer, but I will also seek growth through relationships with other believers within and outside of RC (Col 3.12-14; 2 Pet 3.18).
- I will seek to repent of my known sin and receive the admonition of brothers and sisters who graciously seek to help me (James 5.16; Heb 3.12-14).
- I will endeavor to allow the Gospel to transform the deep structures of my soul including my emotions, my will, and my mind (2 Cor 3.18).
- Because of my allegiance to Jesus, I will seek the unity of the church through extending forgiveness to those who have hurt me and through seeking reconciliation in broken relationships (Eph 4.2, 32).

By signing this covenant, I promise to God, Redemption Church, and myself that I will seek, although imperfectly, to uphold these promises through the Holy Spirit's empowerment for the sake of Jesus' Kingdom.

SIGNATURE:

Name: _____ Printed Name: _____

(Spouse): _____ Printed Name: _____

Date: _____