

We purpose together to manifest our core values and our covenant membership obligations in our ministries. Our ministries flow out of the growth produced in certain actions of our church life. These actions can be expressed in three main ways: Congregate, Cultivate, and Commission.

Congregate

Gathering

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42

“...not neglecting (forsaking) to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:25

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:27

The assembling of believers is important to the individuals who make up the local church. In Acts 2:42, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. They were present to hear the apostles teach. They were not at home podcasting, but physically present at the time of the teaching of the word. They were there to fellowship. The word for fellowship is, *koinonia*, the sharing of close community centered around the gospel. They had to be present to be in close community. Many people put the breaking of bread with the fellowship experience, but that is not all it is. They did dedicate themselves to sharing meals together. Sharing a meal together is a close activity. They also devoted themselves to prayer. The early church was defined by an activity of prayer. It was something they did every time they came together. Hebrews 10:25 encourages us not to forsake our time together. It is an important time. Community is absolutely necessary for the Christian. 1 Corinthians 12:27 reiterates the fact that we are one body; a collection of organs placed together to carry out a specific function.

The time of congregating is a celebratory time. To celebrate who God is, what He has done, and what He is going to do!

“Wherever we find the Word of God surely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a church of God.” -John Calvin

Cultivate

Growth

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” Ephesians 4:15-16

“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,¹⁹ puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.” Colossians 2:16-19

It's safe to say that one of the primary expectations that God has of us is that we will be people who are constantly growing in our faith and relationship with Him. Just like a parent expects their child to grow physically, so God expects us to grow spiritually. Because God expects this of us, we believe it's a valid expectation that we would have of everyone who decides to unite with our body. How does growth happen? We believe the equation that results in spiritual growth is the intake of God's Word and the application of God's Word. There are numerous passages in Scripture that talk about the necessity of digesting the Word of God (Joshua 1:8-9; Psalm 119). Why is God so adamant about us reading, studying, and meditating on His Word? Because it is absolutely essential if we are going to grow! Secondly, not only must we intake God's Word, we must do it. James 1:22-25 is the clearest passage on this point and states that hearing isn't good enough, but doing is essential!

When a person is on a steady diet and regiment of God's Word and applying it consistently, the result will be growth and maturity. You won't have to worry about your growth - it will happen. Just like a person who eats right and works out consistently doesn't have to worry about being fat, so we won't have to worry about growing as long as we are doing those two things. Or to say it another way: Input + Output = Growth. Because of this, our commitment as a church will be to correctly teach the Word of God, providing you with a healthy, steady diet of God's Word. That's why we expect all of our members to consistently attend our corporate gatherings

where the Word will be taught. In addition, we provide certain small group classes and other opportunities that will allow you to learn Bible study methods and to dive in deeper for yourself. We will also give numerous opportunities for you to intentionally apply the truth of God's Word. Finally, we think we should state the obvious. Our church is not responsible for your growth. You must own that. The best we can do is to provide environments that stimulate your growth.

“Gradual growth in grace, growth in knowledge, growth in faith, growth in love, growth in holiness, growth in humility, growth in spiritual-mindedness - all this I see clearly taught and urged in Scripture, and clearly exemplified in the lives of many of God's saints. But sudden, instantaneous leaps from conversion to consecration I fail to see in the Bible.” – J.C. Ryle

Grace

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” 2 Peter 3:18

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

One of the areas we're to specifically grow in, according to 2 Peter 3:18, is grace. This is the second major expectation we have of our members: that we would be a community of grace. Gordon MacDonald once said that the world cannot really offer grace, only the church can offer true grace. It is the church that is to be an instrument of grace in and to our world.

If ever there was an area of the life of Christ we are to pattern ourselves after, it's this one. John wrote in his gospel that when he saw Jesus, he saw a man full of grace and truth. We see the grace of Christ in action as He hung out with prostitutes, tax collectors, and lepers. He was even called a friend of sinners. He broke social norms when He allowed a bleeding woman to touch Him publicly and shared meals with the societal downcasts. All of this was grace in motion. We see His ultimate act of grace as He died on the cross, offering salvation for all! Because we're recipients of His gracious gift of salvation, we are obligated as a way of life to extend grace to others! Therefore, since grace is a requirement in our church, what is also required is that all of our members be followers of Jesus Christ, recipients of is grace. What does this mean? Grace means to give someone what he or she doesn't deserve. Because of this we fulfill the mandate of

grace when we extend forgiveness to those who have wronged us. We extend grace to people who have fallen into sin. We extend grace when we look to come alongside the wounded and restore, instead of to stone and cast out. We extend grace even if it means breaking a cultural norm (not the Word of God) to reach someone who doesn't know the Savior. That's gracious living. And that's the kind of community we want to create!

“Growth in grace is growth downward. It is the forming of a lower estimate of ourselves. It is a deepening realization of our nothingness. It is a heartfelt recognition that we are not worthy of the least of God's mercies.” – A.W Pink

Gifts

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, ^[a] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, ^[b] with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” Romans 12:3-8

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”

I Corinthians 12:1-11

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified

through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”
1 Peter 4:7-11

One of the acts of grace that God has bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit is the giving of spiritual gifts to every believer. What is a spiritual gift? It's a God given ability for service within the body of Christ! A spiritual gift is not the same as a talent or a natural ability. A person who is good with his hands or solving mathematical equations is endowed with talents that are to be used for the glory of God, but these are not what we would call spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is something that was given to the individual at the point of conversion by the Holy Spirit. These gifts are specifically to be used for His glory and mostly for the building up of the body of Christ (evangelism is different). These gifts are not to be used from a posture of arrogance or mere giftedness, but out of love (It's interesting that 1 Corinthians 12-14 deals with spiritual gifts, and the middle chapter deals with love). One word of caution should be mentioned before we move on. Just because something is not your gift doesn't mean God hasn't called you to do it. For example, just because someone doesn't have the gift of serving or witnessing doesn't mean they're exempt from it.

Most people rely on Spiritual gifts inventories to discover their giftings. Nothing is innately wrong with this method, but we can tend to be biased in our answers and the tests can be ineffective at best. Get involved! Try to help in many areas. You will quickly find out what ministries the Spirit has gifted you in for service.

“Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry, characteristics of Jesus Christ that are to be manifested through the body corporate just as they were manifested through the body incarnate.” –John MacArthur

Groups

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

“But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

²¹ *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 Corinthians 12:18-21*

Our gifts were meant to be used within the context of community...within the body of Christ. It is within community, using our gifts to build one another up, that we grow. Or to say it another way, community is vital to growth and the Christian life. Scripture is filled with examples of people living in community and the blessings that came from that principle. The nation of Israel was set up in such a way that community would be maximized (the 12 tribes, and the subsequent clans). Daniel lived in community with his three friends, and they sustained each other through tough and challenging times. The same can be said of the twelve disciples and their relationship to Jesus. We believe the message of Scripture is more than clear: community is essential! While we recognize that community cannot be forced, one of our primary intentional opportunities for this will be our small group ministry. It will be a chance for us to share lives and build each other up, helping to sustain and strengthen us in our journey. This is one of the heartbeats of our church, and an expectation – that all of us will seek and experience vital, intimate community.

"Our love to God is measured by our everyday fellowship with others and the love it displays." –Andrew Murray

Generosity

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16

"But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. ⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹ So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack..." ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of

your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!” 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; 9:13-15

Obviously the use of our gifts and the commitment of our time to invest in the lives of other people through our groups are going to demand generosity on our part. Generosity with our gifts, time, and money serves the purpose of helping to build the kingdom of God here on earth. Scripture teaches us clearly that we are to be generous stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Ephesians 5:15-16 tells us that we are to make the most of our time here on earth. Because tomorrow, or the next moment for that matter, is not promised to us, we are to be generous with our time, maximizing it to the glory of God. As a church we want to be sensitive to your schedule. There will be more than enough to do through our church, but even in that we want you to leave time in your schedules to be generous contributors to the kingdom of God, being used of Him in a variety of ways, both intentional and spontaneous.

We’re also to be intentional with our money: 2 Corinthians 8:7-15 and 9:6-15 point to this. We are stewards of God’s money, and as such He wants us to use His resources not only to enjoy life, but also to help build His kingdom. One of the primary expressions of His kingdom here on earth is the local church. Because of this, we expect that every member give generously, sacrificially, and systematically to our church. A good place to begin is the truth of Malachi 3:10, “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”

The freedom we have under grace is realized in the fact that we are not bound to the law of the tithe, but we are free to give in response to the generosity of God in our salvation. We give out of the overflow of our hearts generosity toward God. So, ten percent is a great jumping off point to obey the Lord and bless Him with your finances.

“Things like radical generosity and audacious faith are not produced when we focus on them, but when we focus on the gospel.” J.D. Greear

Commission

Global Missions

*“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!”
Psalm 96:3*

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come... And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20*

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
Acts 1:8*

The culmination of all these things overflows into a heart for the nations. We do missions on the basis of the spread of the glory of God. John Piper exerts that, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man... Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It’s the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God’s glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God... But worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching... Missions begins and ends in worship.” – (p.17, *Let the Nations Be Glad*)

God is to be treasured above all. He is deserving of all worship because He is the one true God. Missions is obedience to the mandate given in Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus is the sovereign God with all authority. If God is for us, who could be against us? So, we obey the command of God to Go, make disciples, and baptize all people groups. We join the Lord in His mission for

the glory of His name. This is not a suggestion; this is not a gifting of certain people. This is an order to all who claim the name of Christ.

Conclusion

These are our expectations. A version of these can also be found in our church covenant. We don't believe that these expectations are limited to our church, but they are for everyone who is associated with the Name of Jesus Christ. These expectations transcend all the local churches, and extend out to the universal church. For everyone who meets these expectations will not only experience a successful, abundant life, but will experience a successful, abundant church.