



abundantLife
assembly of God

Introduction

The *Abundant Life Membership Covenant* was formed out of our love for the church body and its individual members. Our prayer is that you will experience the fullness of joy that is only found in knowing and pursuing Christ. This document has (4) primary purposes:

- To make known and assist you in understanding the biblical obligations and expectations of *both* the elders and individual members of Abundant Life.
- To establish and clarify the doctrines that Abundant Life practices and teaches.
- To serve as a tool for growth in personal and corporate holiness.
- To equip each individual member within our body to fulfill the Great Commission¹ as they faithfully pursue and commit themselves to the biblical model of church².

The Church

Followers of Christ have been invited to join God as He carries out His redemptive plan in the world. Though the world we live in is fallen and cursed, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the means by which the world is being made right. The Church, meaning all believers in all places, is the instrument by which God is fulfilling His redemptive plan³. This makes the opportunity to join a local church much more than just a commitment to attend services and meetings. It is the call to be involved and committed to the life-changing work of our God.

Each individual part of the human body relies upon the other individual members to properly function. Likewise, the body of Christ relies upon one another for spiritual growth and health. A member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is not needed⁴. We all have gifts that differ given to us by the Holy Spirit⁵. Seemingly contrary to the belief of our culture, we need each other. Membership at Abundant Life is a participation in a family. All members are disciples of Jesus, brought into unity by their identity in Christ. Because of this identification with Christ, Christians are expected to live in a manner that displays Christ's worth to the world⁶.

What Is a Covenant?

The gospel not only calls us to a personal relationship with Christ, it calls us to each other. At Abundant Life, we believe that God's people are called to live out our faith together, reflecting God's Triune nature. In other words, to be a biblical Christian is to invest your life in a local church.

Examples of covenants can be found throughout the Bible, early as the book of Genesis⁷, and are still used today to speak of commitments such as marriage. A covenant is an oath; it's a promise in which two or more parties commit themselves to one another. Some covenants are *between people and God*⁸, and others are made solely

¹ Matthew 28:18-20

² Acts 2:42-47

³ 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:21

⁵ Romans 12:3-8

⁶ Ephesians 4:1

⁷ Genesis 6:18; 9:9-17; 17:4-21

⁸ Genesis 6, 9, and 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26

*between people*⁹. A covenant defines responsibility for both parties and carries obligations that each party commits to. Nearly all covenants between people, including covenant membership at Abundant Life, are *conditional*. This means that the covenant is able to be broken if either side fails in keeping their commitment and remain unrepentant about their failure.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the Abundant Life church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is their responsibility to lovingly and humbly express their concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere.

While the covenant will clarify the requirements and obligations of Abundant Life's elders and members, it would serve us well to remember that the covenant is, first and foremost, a summary of basic Christian practices that reflect our commitment to Jesus and His church.

Why Formal Membership in a Church?

Abundant Life's aim is to faithfully live out the Scriptures while being empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. With this in mind, Abundant Life believes the Scriptures teach that every Christian should join a church. Although there is no direct command in Scripture that says, "Every Christian must join a local church," there are several factors that indicate every Christian should commit to becoming a formal member of a local church. We feel confident in using these passages as a Scriptural basis to encourage and ask you to become a formal, covenant member of our local body:

- *The biblical metaphors used to describe local churches*¹⁰. Flock, temple, body, and household are used when speaking of local churches. Each metaphor has a clear distinction of who is part of the church, and who isn't.
- *The meaning of the word "join."* After the death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:13, no non-Christians "dared join them [the church], but the people esteemed them highly." The Greek word for *join* has an implication of strong commitment. The same word is used to speak of sexual relationships¹¹ and joining to the Lord¹².
- *1 Corinthians 5:12-13: "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside."* Paul asks the Corinthians to judge those who were inside the church, not those who were outside. They were responsible for the testimony of those who belonged to the church, not those who didn't. This passage makes no sense if the Corinthian church didn't have some formal means by which people identified themselves with the church.
- *The New Testament shows God's people keeping records of members*¹³. Most of the New Testament epistles are written not to individuals, but "to the church."¹⁴
- *Hebrews 13:17*. This command assumes that one has a close relationship with specific spiritual leaders. They are responsible for you and you to them.

⁹ 1 Samuel 18:1-5; 2 Samuel 5:3; Ephesians 5

¹⁰ Acts 20:29; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 1 Timothy 3:15

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 6:16

¹² 1 Corinthians 6:17

¹³ Acts 2:37-47; Romans 16:1-16

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Revelation 1:4

"In the New Testament there is no such person as a Christian who is not a church member. Conversion was described as 'the Lord adding to the church' (Acts 2:47). There was no spiritual drifting." (Douglas Millar).

Statement of Basic Beliefs

The following beliefs are truths that Abundant Life consider to be the central doctrines from a biblical and historical perspective. Although a full understanding and the ability to perfectly articulate these beliefs are not required, the rejection of any of these would disqualify one from membership at Abundant Life.

I believe...

- there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; Isaiah 46:9-10; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5).
- the Scriptures are true, authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- God is Trinity. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is neither the Son nor the Father (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
- I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), by birth and action, a sinner (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:8, 5:12-21; 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- the deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin and is both fully God and fully human (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-13).
- Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (John 1:29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; 1 Corinthians 15:12-34).
- Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- there will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal life. Those who have not trusted in Jesus will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone can I be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy (John 3:18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Biblical Doctrine

The doctrines expressed in the "Statement of Basic Belief" are those that are recognized to be the primary beliefs a Christian church must hold to be included as part of the Church of Jesus Christ. Abundant Life adheres to, believes, and will teach them, while also holding and adhering to some theologically distinct doctrines. These doctrines come from the document titled *Statement of Fundamental Truths* produced by the Assembly of God Fellowship. These are truths that are to be upheld and taught by all churches belonging to the Assembly of God. As a member of the Assembly of God Fellowship, Abundant Life adheres to all doctrines found in the *Statement of Fundamental Truths*.

I understand...

- it is a responsibility of membership to read the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* in its entirety and address any questions, comments, or concerns with an elder.
- the importance of submission to church leadership and to the unity of a body of believers. I will adhere to the "Statement of Basic Belief" and the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* while accepting the content expressed in them to be sound biblical doctrine. I will not be divisive or create controversy within the church over the theology and doctrines presented in them.

We want you to understand that we welcome all questions, comments, and concerns when it comes to these beliefs and doctrines. Our elders will gladly take time to go through the Scriptures with you and discuss why we have arrived at and agree with these positions.

Biblical Obligations of Abundant Life Elders to the Abundant Life Members

"...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you"

-Exhortation to elders

1 Peter 5:2

Elders are the shepherds and overseers of a local church and are entrusted to protect, lead, equip, and care for a particular body of believers. As such, the elders of Abundant Life covenant with God and to our covenant members, the following:

- to appoint elders and deacons (including various staff and staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church and steward the resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to pray for you regularly, *particularly* when you are sick (James 5:14).
- 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 and warn members of false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- to lovingly exercise discipline, as outlined in Scripture, when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

Biblical Obligations of the Members to the Abundant Life Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this as "living by the Spirit."¹⁵ The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the

¹⁵ Romans 8

biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, these obligations serve primarily as an explanation of what the Scriptures teach regarding basic Christian obedience and to declare that, as Christians, the way in which we live matters.

I covenant...

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and the practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances He gave to His Church:
 - by being baptized after my conversion.
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the work of Christ through communion.
- to regularly participate in the life of our church by attending weekly services and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- to build relationships with other members (1 Corinthians 12:21).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in the life of our church that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-29; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- to not function in leadership or as a member in another church family (Hebrews 13:17).
- by God's grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Below are a few examples of actions clearly addressed in the Scriptures:
 - I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, pornography, cohabitation, and homosexuality (Job 31:1; Proverbs 5; Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 7:16,10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to meet and receive counsel from the elders of Abundant Life before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).
 - I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- to bring up those under our care, in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of my family and friends (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 6:4).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (Romans 14:14-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another – the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- to do the following when I sin:
 - confess my sin to God and to fellow believers. Repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).
- to do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:
 - to notify the elders
 - to seek another church where I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

These covenant obligations are not meant to be exclusive or to turn people away. The point in requiring these things of prospective members is to help the church reflect God's character to the world. When a church's members are genuine, growing Christians, it creates an atmosphere where ministry can flourish. Abundant Life is confident that it is a loving act to require that church members be genuine, growing Christians. By following the commands in Scripture, you are led to joy. That is why we want to clarify and make known these commands and help you to obey them.

Benefits of Membership at Abundant Life

Our goal is to care for you and love you well. The list that follows is not exhaustive, but contains some general benefits for a believer who commits to a local church.

- *It helps you grow.* It's good to commit yourself to love and serve others. You will grow as a Christian as you commit to encourage, build up, strengthen, serve, and pray for other Christians.
- *Other Christians commit to you.* If you're a member of Abundant Life, you have an entire church full of people who are committed to loving, serving, and watching over you.
- *Elder protection.* If you're a member of Abundant Life, our elders will care for you, pray for you, and personally counsel and teach you. As a member of Abundant Life, they are accountable to God for how they lead you (Hebrews 13:17).
- *Assurance.* Membership is Abundant Life's affirmation of the validity of your profession of faith. Membership in a church doesn't guarantee that someone is a Christian, but it does assure believers of the genuineness of their faith.
- *Provision.* The opportunity for Abundant Life and its members to give and provide for your needs given you meet the biblical requirements to do so (Acts 2:45; Acts 4:34-35; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:1-16; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).
- *Participation.* The right to be a voting member on issues that are brought to our church's membership.
- *Edification.* An opportunity and place (during corporate worship services in the presence of elders and mature Christians) to function and be used in the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Abundant Life church body (1 Corinthians 12, 14).
- *Opportunity.* Members are *encouraged and equipped* to pursue leadership in our church. The leading of *any* ministry at Abundant Life is to be carried out and overseen by covenant members.

"When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay." (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)

Please fill out the information below and return to Abundant Life. If you are covenanting to formal membership as a married couple, please provide each person's name, information, and signature. Thank you!

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

SIGNATURE: _____
