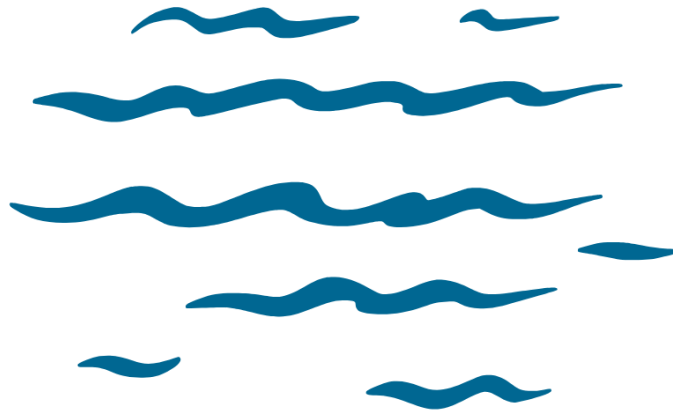


**PATHWAY TO MEMBERSHIP**

*Grace*  
**101**

EST. 1944



# WELCOME TO GRACE 101

We're so glad you've joined us today. Consider this a pathway to membership or, if you're just checking things out, a great place to get to know people, learn more about the beliefs and ministries of the church, and what it means to follow Jesus with others.

Grace 101 has 3 parts that take place over 3 weeks:

Part 1: Who is Grace?

Part 2: Who are You?

Part 3: Who are We Together?

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## PART 1: WHO IS GRACE?

### 1) A Community Formed By The Gospel

How would you answer the question, "What is the gospel?"

Common answers:

- Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- Good News
- Forgiveness of sins
- The redemption of mankind
- Having a relationship with God
- The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus

## Some help from the Apostle Paul

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared...

### Ephesians 2:1-10

1. Who We Were (vv. 1-3) "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

- *What does this teach us about us?*

2. What Happened (vv. 4-7) "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

- *What does this teach us about God?*

3. How It Happened (vv. 8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

- *What does this teach us about salvation?*

4. Why It Happened (v. 10) "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

- *What does this teach us about God's purpose for our lives?*

## 2) A Community That Believes Certain Things

### STATEMENT OF BELIEF

It's not enough to say, "our church believes what the Bible teaches" or "the Bible is our only creed." A statement of faith, carefully written, seeks to preserve the gospel, promote unity in the church, and protect the future of the church. Our statement of faith is not inspired by God, as the Scriptures are, but is rather a summary of historic Christian faith and, therefore, incredibly helpful.

**God** - We believe that there is one true God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that the Triune God is the Creator of all things visible and invisible and that knowledge of this truth is necessary to understand the meaning and purpose of all reality. (Deut. 6.4; 1 Tim. 2.5; Gen. 1.1; Mt. 3.16-17; 28.19-20)

**The Lord Jesus Christ** - We believe in the pre-existence and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and in His incarnation through the Virgin Mary and His full humanity. We believe in His sinless, obedient life, the reality of His recorded miracles and in forgiveness of sin through His shed blood on the cross. We believe in His bodily resurrection, His ascension and His present ministry at the right hand of the Father. We believe in His personal second coming. (John 1.1, 14; Mt. 1.18-25; Heb. 4.15; Gal. 3.10-13; Luke 9.22; Acts 1.9 & 2.33)

**The Holy Spirit** - We believe in the present personal ministry of the Holy Spirit in every believer. We believe every believer is indwelt by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ and equipped by the Spirit with various spiritual gifts. We believe it is the will of God that every believer be empowered, or filled, with the Holy Spirit for effective service. (Rom. 8.9-11; 1 Cor. 12.13; Acts 1.8; Rom. 12.4-8; 1 Cor. 12-14)

**The Scriptures** - We believe the Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God, altogether sufficient for all matters of faith and practice. (2 Tim. 3.16-17; Prov. 12.6; Heb. 4.17; Jn. 17.17)

**Humanity** - We believe that God created man as male and female in His own image. We believe each person has infinite worth and is answerable to their Creator. We believe mankind has fallen into sin resulting in spiritual death, and that the New Birth, or Regeneration, is necessary for salvation. (Gen. 1.26-27; Gen. 3; John 3.3; Rom. 5.12-21)

**Salvation** - We believe in a complete and eternal salvation by God's grace alone, received as a gift of God through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 8.1; Jn. 10.27-30; Eph. 2.8-10)

**The One True Church** - We believe in the spiritual unity of all who have faith in Jesus Christ. We also believe in the organization of believers into local churches for worship, edification and witness. (1 Cor. 12.12-13; Gal. 1.2; Phil. 1.1)

**Ordinances** - We believe that Christ has ordained that His Church observe the Sacraments of (1) Baptism and (2) Communion. (Mt. 28.19; Acts 2.41; 1 Cor. 11.23-26; Acts 20.7)

**Christian Life** - We believe God calls every Christian to a life of good works and spiritual freedom, service to the church and community, separation unto God's will and away from evil. We believe in the sanctity of the home, purity in sexual relationships, the sacredness of human life, the necessity of manifesting the fruit of the Spirit and a Christ-like character, and the importance of a life of prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship and personal witness. (Eph. 2.10; 1 Tim. 2.1-2; 1 Pet. 1.13-16; Eph. 5.22-6.9; Gal. 5.16-26; Acts 2.42-27)

**Satan** - We believe in the existence of the Devil, as a distinct created personal being, the great adversary of God and His people. We believe in Satan's final defeat and judgment. (Gen. 3.1; Mt. 4.1-11; 1 Pet. 5.8; Rev. 20.7-10)

**Second Coming** - We believe in the personal and visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ to join His church with Himself, to defeat evil and to establish His rule as King of Kings. We believe that this truth is to lead Christians to live godly, productive lives in the present world and to await eagerly His appearing. (Zech. 14.4-5; Acts 1.11; 1 Thess. 4.16-17; Rev. 20-21; Titus 2.11-14)

**Future Life** - We believe that death is "gain" for the Christian, for they enter the presence of the Lord. We believe there will be a resurrection and a judgment of both the righteous and the unrighteous; the righteous will enter eternal blessings and the unrighteous eternal condemnation. (Phil. 1.21; 2 Cor. 5.6-8; Mt. 25.31-46)

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## TEACHING POSITIONS

Our church Teaching Positions are where we "say more" about our Statement of Faith. Agreement with the Teaching Positions isn't required for membership, but you can expect to hear them taught at Grace.

For instance, here's our Teaching Position #4 regarding "Communion"

We regularly observe that form of Christian Communion known as the "Threefold Communion Service" consisting of (a) the Love Feast, (b) the Washing of the Saints' Feet and (c) the Communion of the Bread and Cup (the Eucharist). We also consider it within our liberty to practice any of these portions separately from the others. We regard the Eucharist to be the central focus of Communion.

[You can find all our Teaching Positions on our web site - [www.gracesealbeach.org](http://www.gracesealbeach.org) - under the 'About' tab, Beliefs + Values]

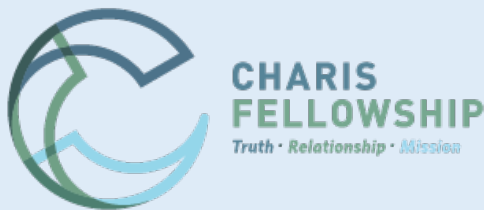
### 3) A Community That Embodies Certain Values

- Biblical Worldview: *Am I growing in obedience to God's Word?*
- Known by Name: *Who am I cultivating authentic relationships with?*
- Participatory Worship: *Have I spent time with God today?*
- Faithful Compassion: *Who am I showing the love of God to?*
- Missional Life: *Who am I helping to know God?*

### 4) A Community That Is Part Of A Bigger Community

Grace Community Church of Seal Beach is a member of Charis Fellowship (North America). "Charis" is the Greek word for Grace. We were formerly known as Grace Brethren, a family of churches who trace their roots back to Germany, where in 1708 a small group of sincere Christ-followers committed to form a church that would be faithful to the teachings of the New Testament. Persecution soon forced them to emigrate to North America and over the centuries, the movement grew to include over 260 churches in the U.S. and Canada with an additional 3,000 churches outside North America that confess "Jesus is Lord," believe the Bible is the Word of God, and are committed to taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

In 2018 the new global Charis Alliance was formed to connect national groups of churches around the world where Grace Brethren missionaries had planted churches over the past one hundred years. Here in North America, Charis Fellowship is an equal member with other national groups around the world.



#### **Charis History**

<https://charisalliance.org/en/about/>

#### **Charis Fellowship in the United States**

<https://charisfellowship.com/>

#### **Charis Missions**

<https://www.encompassworldpartners.org/>

## 5) A Community With A Long History In Seal Beach

In 2019, we celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Grace Community Church of Seal Beach. The church was sponsored ("planted") by the First Brethren Church of Long Beach and was officially organized and received into the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches in 1944.

Prior to owning the property on 8<sup>th</sup> & Central, the church met in what is now Walt's Wharf. When the lease expired, the church began meeting in the social hall of the old City Hall. During this time they also purchased five lots on 8<sup>th</sup> & Central for \$5,500 on which the original building (North Church) now stands. The property was a former parking lot of a bingo parlor that was big business



in the old days of Seal Beach. The foundation for the building was laid and George Peek, the church's first full-time pastor, became the building contractor and supervisor as well as continuing his pastoral duties. Since World War II was on, building materials were hard to get. God, however, provided all that was needed to construct the building for \$5/sq. ft. The chapel building was

dedicated in March 1947. In early 1952 the church already needed more room to grow. It was at this time that the church purchased two lots of property, which included two houses, next door to the original corner lot, for \$3,800. The pastor lived in one and the other became Sunday school classes. In the early 1980s the two



homes were torn down and the Sanctuary was put up in their place. Since 1984, Grace has had three Senior Pastors: Don Shoemaker (1984-2012), Steve Williams (2012-2017), and Bob Wriedt (2017-present). And since 2010, Grace has undergone three Waves of renovations to maintain a great place for ministry and to continue to be a welcoming place for the great city of Seal Beach.

To God be the glory!

## 6) A Community Where Ministry Happens

While some are called to vocational ministry, most of God's people are not. We believe in "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4.12) and desire to help each person find where they can use their gifts to minister to others.

In accordance with our Constitution and By-Laws, Grace is led by:

1. The Board of Elders
2. The Pastoral Staff:
  - Bob Wriedt: Senior Pastor
  - Tim Culling: Associate Pastor
  - Chris Howard: Worship Pastor
  - Steve Williams: Pastor of Seniors
  - Don Shoemaker: Pastor Emeritus
3. The Ministry Staff:
  - Kathy Vincent: Interim Director of Children's Ministry
  - Randi Kisner: Director of Middle School Ministry
  - Jason Ricafranca: Director of High School and College Ministries
  - Josie Ramirez: Director of Women's Ministry
  - Amanda Buda: Director of Communications
  - Christa Heideman: Director of Operations
  - Greg Airhart: Business Administrator
4. Serve Teams: Facilities, Finance, Safety and Security, Karing Kitchens, Stephen Ministry, Worship, and volunteering in Children or Student Ministries.

To find out more about our specific ministries, you can contact the ministry leader directly or visit the church website.

All staff can be reached through the church office phone number (562.596.1605) or by emailing them at [firstname@gracesealbeach.org](mailto:firstname@gracesealbeach.org) (e.g. [tim@gracesealbeach.org](mailto:tim@gracesealbeach.org))

### **HOMEWORK for Session #2:**

- Spiritual Gifts Inventory (link will be sent)
- Grace Story



## PART 2: WHO ARE YOU?

### 1) A Person Who Has Their Identity "In Christ"

**I am In Christ** - "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22; see also Rom. 5.12-21)

**I am Justified** - "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8.1)

**I am Adopted** - "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (Jn. 1.12)

**I am Secure** – "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8.38-39)

**I am Free** - "If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin." (Rom. 6.5-6)

**I am Unfinished** - "I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1.6)

*Which of these do you cling to the most?*

*Which of these would you do well to remember more often?*

## 2) A Person Who Has Been Given Spiritual Gifts By God

Spiritual gifts can be defined as, "any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church." Some are related to natural abilities such as teaching, showing mercy, or administration. Others seem to be more miraculous such as prophecy, healing, or distinguishing between spirits.

The New Testament lists spiritual gifts in 4 main passages: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 & 28; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:11.

List your top 3 from the inventory and any insights you gained:

#1 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Evangelism:** passionately leading others to the saving knowledge of Christ

**Prophecy:** boldly and fearlessly proclaiming God's truth

**Teaching:** making clear the truth of God's Word with simplicity and accuracy

**Exhortation:** motivating others to action, application, and purpose

**Shepherding:** overseeing, training, feeding, coaching/leading

**Serving:** providing practical help both physically and spiritually

**Mercy-showing:** identifying with and comforting those in need

**Giving:** releasing material resources to further the work of the Church

**Administration:** organizing, administering, promoting, leading

### **3) A Person Who Has A Story To Share (“Grace Story”)**

Think through God’s work in your life and how it forms your Grace Story. If it helps, use the following from Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ) and write it out.

#### **Act 1: Your Life Before Christ**

Paint a picture of what your life was like before you came to Christ.

- What did you think of God and Christians?
- What did you live for?
- Where did you get your security, identity or happiness?
- How did those things begin to let you down?

#### **Act 2: How You Came to Christ**

Give the details about why and how you became a Christian.

- When was the first time you heard the gospel?
- What was your initial reaction?
- When and why did your perspective begin to change toward Christ?

#### **Act 3: Your Life After Coming to Christ**

Share some of the changes that Christ has made in your life.

- How is your life different now? (changes in character, attitude, perspectives on life)
- What motivates you now?
- What do you live for today?

[Use the space provided on the next page to write out your Grace Story]



## PART 3: WHO ARE WE TOGETHER?

Now that we've answered the first two questions, "Who is Grace?" and "Who are You?" it's time to merge to two and ask, "Who are We Together?" This is a question of our life together; a question of membership.

### **Is Church Membership Taught in the Bible?**

While you won't find the early church holding membership classes for believers, the commitment to support one's local church through giving of one's time, talents, and treasures is certainly a biblical concept. The book of Acts gives us a picture of a tight-knit group of saints who were "continually devoting them-selves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Many of these were those who had repented and had been baptized just recently on the Day of Pentecost. "There were," Luke says, "added that day about 3,000 souls" (Acts 2:41). A good question might be, "added to what?" Answer: to God's people, the church! This, along with the choice of deacons "from among yourselves" in Acts 6, and the passages about church discipline in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 makes it clear that the early church had some definition and clear boundaries. It's what we call membership.

### **The 'Who' of Membership**

While we are a church that welcomes any and all to join us for worship, membership in the local church is for those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Those who gave no indication of conversion would never be considered a member of Christ's body by the early church and therefore, following their lead, we have made that our practice as well. As Paul asks the church of Corinth, "For how can one who is unconverted truly seek to abound for the edification of the church?" (1 Cor. 14:12). Membership is an invitation for someone who is already part of God's family to join this local church family.

## The 'Why' of Membership

There are many good reasons to join a church, including the following:

*Commitment* - When you join a church, you're saying, "I'm part of this family and, as such, I have a responsibility to contribute to the health of the family." That happens through faithful attendance, giving, prayer and service. And the church, having received you into membership, is saying, "We see evidence that God is your Father and therefore we belong to each other. Even as you are making a commitment to us, we are making a commitment to you." Joining a church is a promise together to take responsibility for one another.

*Giving and Receiving* - When you join a church, you're acknowledging that you have something to give and a need to receive. You have gifts to be used in the service of others and you have needs that you're unable to address on your own. God has provided the local church to be a place where you can give and receive and to better learn how and why to do so.

*Witness* - When you join a church, you're declaring something about the gospel. You're saying that the good news you've received unites you to all others who've received the same. This unity, or oneness, is an answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17 and has come about "so that the world may believe" the Father has sent the Son. Our unity, most beautifully expressed through love, is a powerful testimony to the watching world (John 13:35).

- *Can you think of any other good reasons to join a church?*

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"Nothing is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope. In community we say: 'Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs - but we do not have to live alone.' We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate that the wounds of our individual lives, which seem intolerable when lived alone, become sources of healing when we live them as part of a fellowship of mutual care."

- Henri Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*

\*\* VIDEO: Church Hunters 2

## The 'What' of Membership

Membership is a commitment, or covenant, that two parties make to one another. Similar to a marriage, there are vows that each makes to the other.

What church leaders vow to church members:

- We will provide opportunities for corporate worship
- We will be committed to biblical teaching in line with the Gospel, our Statement of Belief, and the church's Teaching positions
- We will strive for a godly life that's above reproach
- We will seek to carry out ministry in line with the Grace Values
- We will equip the congregation to engage in meaningful ministry
- We will provide spiritual care and shepherding to the congregation such as Pastoral counseling, Stephen Ministry, hospital visits, and church discipline

**Church discipline**, though sad and unfortunate, is something that must take place if we are to be obedient to God, exalt His holy character, and not tarnish our testimony as His people. It occurs in informal ways (interpersonal, spontaneous, "iron sharpening iron") and formal ways (subsequent to informal not working, sometimes involving the elders). Reasons include an unresolved sin issue with someone in the church, an immoral lifestyle, or being divisive (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 6:9; Titus 3:10-11). The purpose of church discipline is redemptive, not revengeful. As Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew, it is to "gain your brother" (Mt. 18:15-20).

What church members vow to church leaders:

- I will submit myself to the leaders of Grace as they keep watch over the souls of our congregation
- I will seek to live in accordance with the Word of God
- I will use my spiritual gifts, talents, personality, and strengths to serve my fellow members and glorify God
- I will seek the unity of the church, being quick to forgive and avoiding gossip
- I will support the church financially as an act of worship, knowing that I am just a steward and God is the owner of all
- I will regularly attend the worship services of the church
- I will participate in decisions by the congregation regarding the following actions:
  - 1) The annual church budget
  - 2) The annual nominations to the Board of Elders
  - 3) The changing of the church's Constitution
  - 4) The decision to call a Senior Pastor

# HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER AT GRACE

Having put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

- Complete Grace 101
- Complete the Membership Application (included)
- Connect with a Grace leader for a Membership Talk
- Be recommended by the elders and affirmed by the congregation on a Sunday





**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of Grace Community Church of Seal Beach. May the Lord guide you and us as we press ahead. Please return your completed application to Pastor Tim via email, in-person, or by mailing it to: 138 Eighth Street, Seal Beach, 90740.

**General Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been attending Grace? \_\_\_\_\_

Which service do you normally attend? 8:00 / 9:30 / 11:00

Working Status: homemaker / part-time / full-time / student / retired

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Married Status: single / married / divorced / widowed

Spouse's name (if married): \_\_\_\_\_

**Children:**

Name	Birthdate	Grade
	____/____/____	
	____/____/____	
	____/____/____	
	____/____/____	
	____/____/____	

**Please answer the following:**

1. Have you confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Yes / No
2. Have you been baptized? Yes / No
  - If No, the pastors would love to talk with you about our next baptism.
  - If Yes, how and when? (e.g. sprinkled as an infant, immersed as an adult, etc.)
3. What ministries have you been involved with at Grace?
4. What ministries would you like to know more about?
5. What are the greatest ways you feel you can serve this church?
6. What are the greatest ways you feel this church can serve you?
7. What was the last church you attended prior to coming to Grace? What were the circumstances that led to your departure?
8. Are there any questions or concerns you would like to discuss prior to joining the church?

**Willing to serve**

My gifts, skills and personality make me a good fit to serve with... (check up to 5)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety + Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worship (slides/sound)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Children’s volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Church finances	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worship (instrument)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Middle school volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility (upkeep + improvement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worship (vocals)	<input type="checkbox"/>	High school volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Karing Kitchens (meals)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greeter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Missions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephen Ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Usher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Compassion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Church office support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hospitality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Giving Rides

To find a fuller description of our Serve Teams, visit: [www.gracesealbeach.org/serveteams](http://www.gracesealbeach.org/serveteams)

**Membership Covenant**

“I want to serve God as a member of Grace Community Church of Seal Beach. I have received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I accept the Bible as God’s Word, the final authority in all matters of faith and life and will seek to live in accordance with it. I accept the teachings of this church as set forth in its Statement of Belief and believe I can work in harmony with the church’s ministries and values. I accept the spiritual guidance of the leadership of this church and by God’s grace I covenant to live in unity with the body, being quick to forgive and avoiding gossip. I will support the church through the use of my spiritual gifts, through regular attendance and service, and through the faithful giving of my finances. God help me, by His grace, to live out this covenant.”

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_