

Heart of Membership



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



We commit ourselves to the blessings of discipleship taught by Jesus in the Beatitudes (*Matthew 5:3-10*):

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

We acknowledge our inherent poverty in spirit. We are all beggars, steeped in sin, unable to save ourselves. By God's grace we have life and all we need to sustain it. By God's grace we believe that our sins have been forgiven and eternal life given to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We live in daily repentance, for it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom (*Luke 12:32*).

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

We mourn the world's vain attempts to be rich in spirit. We are deeply disturbed by the vicious dominance of Mammon in our world – the idolatrous lust for power, prestige and possessions. Poor in spirit, we recognize Mammon's work in ourselves, and we mourn its influence in our brothers and sisters in Christ and especially those who do not know, trust or follow Jesus.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Our poverty in spirit compels us to a life of humble simplicity and generosity. We will be content with God's basic provision so that any excess may flow through us as a blessing to others. We commit to put others above ourselves in order to lift them up. We will not seek positions of power or prestige, but if given them we will serve God and others in grateful humility.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

As we mourn the destructive power of sin in this world, we also ache for creation to function as God originally intended. We long for righteousness to be restored, one person at a time and one situation at a time. Therefore we will strive to live according to God's righteous original intent as a testament to the redemption we have through Christ Jesus.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

We are not content to simply mourn from afar the world's vain attempts to be rich in spirit. Our hunger and thirst for righteousness compels us to seek the Kingdom and his righteousness in the lives of others (*Matthew 6:33*). Since the devil afflicts both body and soul, we will strive to personally assist those in bodily need and lovingly call to repentance those deceived by the devil. By the grace of God, we pray that we may embody the mercy given to us through Jesus so that others may also experience his merciful forgiveness.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

We will intentionally resist the temptation to take personal pride in our works or to practice them to be seen by others. Rather than function under the guise of self-esteem, we will be motivated by our God-esteem. God has esteemed us through Christ to restore us to his service. When our motivation is aligned with his, we can "see God" at work through us and in the lives of others.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Our passionate love for God's created order leads us to be used as his instruments of justice, mercy and peace. To us, peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but the restoration of God's order to a relationship or situation. Just as the Son of God made peace by standing between God and man, receiving the full wrath of both, we as God's children are also willing to follow Jesus' example, step into conflict and potentially suffer from all sides in the effort for real peace.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

We are not ashamed of the Gospel, so we will persevere in this blessed life of discipleship regardless of the threat. While we certainly do not seek persecution, we will endure our suffering joyfully. We will pray relentlessly for our enemies and for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering persecution in other parts of the world.

These Beatitudes describe our deepening in discipleship, not our ascent to a status. As Jesus states, the same "Kingdom of Heaven" is ours when we acknowledge our poverty in spirit and when we suffer persecution for righteousness' sake. While our roles in the Kingdom of Heaven are varied, we are all anticipating the same comfort, inheritance, satisfaction and mercy when we will see Jesus return on that final day to complete our adoption as the children of God.

We commit to live this blessed life of discipleship together as a congregation according to the pattern established by the first Christian church (Acts 2:42-47).

*"They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**." (Acts 2:42)*

The Apostle's Teaching



We are devoted to maturing and deepening in this blessed life of discipleship. Jesus is our Lord, so we will depend on him for salvation and follow his example for how to live.

We will strive to learn from Jesus how to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and to "Love your neighbor as yourself."

(Matthew 22:37-39)

Therefore: We commit to spending regular time in God's word with our brothers and sisters in Christ, learning, discussing and encouraging one another as we follow Jesus.

Fellowship



We are devoted to our life together. We are united through our baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the Name of the Father

As children of God, we have a new family – our brothers and sisters in Christ. We live in total dependence on our Father who gives us life and everything we have.

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." (Acts 2:44-45).

We are devoted to selfless generosity for those in need. Since everything we have is God's, we will consider every excess as a joyful opportunity to assist those who lack.

Therefore: We commit to provide for our brothers and sisters in Christ, serve those outside of the Kingdom of God and to contribute to the collective mission of our congregation.

In the Name of the Son

We are forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection and are prepared to forgive one another in the name of Christ.

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13)

We are devoted to love one another. We will not stand by while a brother or sister in Christ travels down the path toward unrepentant sin.

Therefore: We will speak the truth in love with one another. When we sin against one another, we will humbly seek repentance so that we may forgive one another as we have been forgiven through Christ.

In the Name of the Holy Spirit

God has given us a new Spirit to replace our sinful spirit of selfishness. This Holy Spirit sets us apart from the world even as we are in the midst of it. Together, we are God's Kingdom on the earth, the living representatives of his truth and his grace.

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." (Acts 2:46)

We are devoted to spending time together. Being set apart for God's purpose is not easy. There are many temptations and pitfalls when we are left alone. We need each other.

Therefore: We will build a deep and meaningful network of friendships within the congregation so that we may strengthen one another in our vocations, together shining the light of Christ in this dark world.

Breaking Bread



We are devoted to meaningful, intimate expressions of worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus told us to "Do this in remembrance of me." (*Luke 22:19*) When we gather together to hear God's word, pray, praise, and receive the Lord's Supper, we are strengthened and unified for the mission God has given us.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts..." (Acts 2:46)

Therefore: We commit to worship God regularly with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer



We are devoted to persistent conversational prayer. We will pattern our prayers according to the Lord's Prayer (*Matthew 6:9-13*):

- We will thank and praise our loving, nurturing and protecting Father whose purpose is above all other things.
- We will ask our Father to bless our fellow brothers and sisters in the Kingdom and we will pray that the Holy Spirit will bring others to faith in Jesus.
- We will seek our Father's perfect righteousness in the midst of this broken world.
- We will completely trust our Father for his provision and pray that the abundance be shared with those in need.
- We will plead for God's forgiveness through Christ and release our desire for revenge, forgiving others as we have been forgiven.
- We will praise the Holy Spirit for every opportunity he gives to avoid sin, and rejoice in our victory over the devil through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Therefore: We will be bold to request prayer for our needs and the needs of others. We will intentionally take time for dedicated prayer, preferably with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Mission



We will devote our entire lives, personally and collectively, to the fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*). Authorized by God through our baptism, and sent by him, we will be disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus as we go through life. By the grace of God, when disciples are made we will guide them to be baptized in the Triune name of God and we will personally ensure they are taught the commands of Jesus for their life of discipleship.

"...praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46)

Therefore: We will boldly live this blessed life of discipleship in the midst of those who do not believe and who are not baptized. We hope to joyfully demonstrate to them our faith in Jesus, bring them to baptism and welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.