

Membership

Matters

— DISCOVERING COVENANT MEMBERSHIP —

REACH, TEACH AND LIVE OUR WHAT IT MEANS TO BE
WHOLEHEARTED FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

© 2022 Oak Grove Chburch
6101 32nd Ave
Shellsburg, IA 52332
(319) 453-2065
hi@oakgrove.cc
www.oakgrove.cc

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Any text emphases (bold, italics, underline, highlight) are not original to the biblical text and are intended for teaching purposes.

Membership

Matters

— Discovering Covenant Membership —

We exist to reach, teach, and live out what it means
to be wholehearted followers of Christ.

Contents

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW	6
Our Process	6
Five Goals for Membership Matters	8
The Playing Field.....	8
OUR FOUNDATIONS.....	10
The Gospel	10
The Gospel is God’s offer of new life by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.	10
The Church	21
OUR CALLING	26
Mission.....	26
To reach, teach, and live out what it means to be wholehearted followers of Christ.	26
Values	30
Shifts	31
Spiritual Gifts.....	33
What the Bible Says About Spiritual Gifts.....	33
Spiritual Gifts Assessment	34
Definitions.....	35
Discussion	36
OUR DISTINCTIVES	37
Theological Triage in Pursuit of Unity and Disagreement with Charity	37
Statement of Faith	38
Scripture	38
The Godhead	38
Mankind	39
Sin.....	39
Salvation	39
Satan and Angels.....	40
The Church.....	40
The Ordinances: Baptism and Communion	41

Spiritual Gifts	41
The Return of Christ.....	42
Israel.....	42
Leadership.....	43
Restoration & Discipline	45
Questions to Ask Before Joining a Local Church.....	47
INFORMATION.....	50

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Our Process

Meaningful membership begins with being well-informed. So, we'll spend a significant amount of time talk about our mission, our vision, and our values as a church during Membership Matters. As you learn about Oak Grove, we encourage you to prayerfully consider whether or not God is leading you to become a partner in the Gospel through covenant membership at Oak Grove.

Our desire is for every person who would call Oak Grove Church home to experience the fullness that God has for them through meaningful covenant membership in the Body of Christ as a partner in the Gospel.

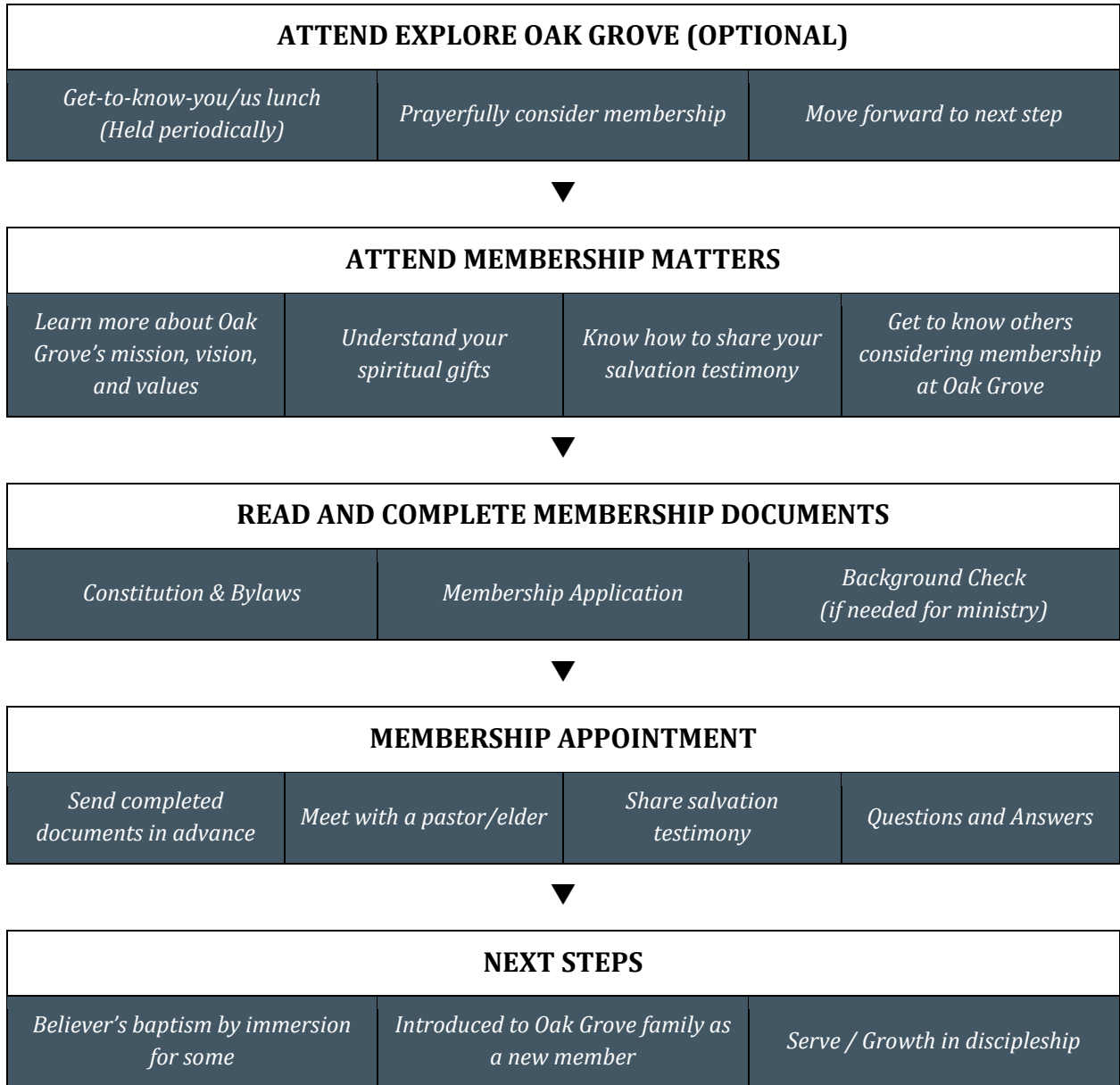
If you believe the Lord is moving you toward membership at Oak Grove, there are a few documents you'll need to read and complete which are intended to help you get to know us in an informed manner, and for us to get to know you in a way that will help us come alongside you in your relationship with God in Christ.

- **Read:** Constitution and Bylaws (<https://oakgrove.cc/constitution-bylaws>)
- **Read:** Theological Triage (<https://oakgrove.cc/theological-triage>)
- **Complete:** Membership application (and background check if you intend to serve in ministry to or with minors) (<https://oakgrove.cc/next-steps/membership-matters/>)

Relationships are important to God, so they are important to us, which is why we build relationship into our membership process. Once your membership application is complete and submitted, we'll take time to meet with you for 30-40 minutes for a membership interview/appointment designed to get to know you better, hear your story, and give you an opportunity to ask any questions of us too. This is an important two-way conversation.

After your membership appointment, our pastors/elders will meet to approve your membership together and identify any next steps your membership may be contingent upon (baptism, doctrinal clarification, etc.).

Here's a quick overview of our membership process:



Five Goals for Membership Matters

1. Understand who Oak Grove Church is, what we believe, and how we operate to reach, teach, and live out what it means to be wholehearted followers of Christ.
2. Know the gospel and how to share it with others by helping you develop and share your personal testimony.
3. Help you enter into meaningful church membership when you're ready.
4. Help you determine where you can best serve the Lord as we consider your spiritual gifts, passions, experience, and ministry needs.
5. Facilitate a connection into an intentional discipling relationship (community groups, life-on-life discipleship, one-on-one Bible reading, biblical counseling, serving, etc.)

The Playing Field

Most games are designed to be played on a field of some sort. The field, markings, barriers, etc. give you freedom to simply “play.”

As you involve yourself more here at Oak Grove, our desire is to give you freedom to serve the Lord and get involved.

The local church’s “field” is framed by Scripture, which defines everything we do.

- The field has fences, or borders, we’ve gleaned from Scripture that are intended to bring organizational clarity and provide direction and guidance for everyone, so we can try to move the ball down the field of Gospel-centered living together.
- **1st fence** is our Constitution & Bylaws, which include our doctrine and practice (we’ll look at this more beginning next week)
- **2nd and 3rd fences** are our Mission/Vision and our Values
- **4th fence** is our Current Practices & Culture. Admittedly more difficult to define, culture is always a very present and active reality, though nearly always invisible. (Vision is on the walls — Culture is in the halls.)

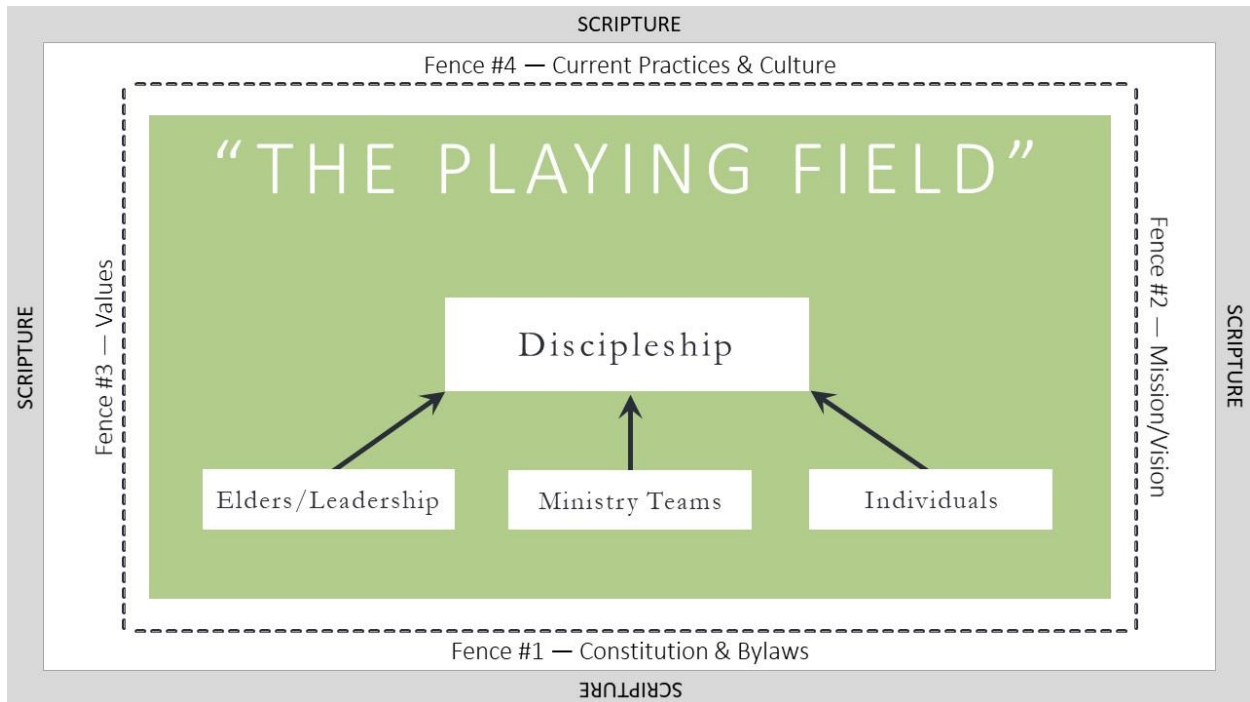
Anecdote: “The Playground Study”¹

¹ <https://www.asla.org/awards/2006/studentawards/282.html>

Now we move to the action ON the field.

- Our elders/leadership lead ministry teams that involve individuals. Whether in a formal ministry, or a Bible Study/Community Group, etc., we want to see everything/everyone pressing upward into discipleship (in various forms).

Let's do a deeper dive, now, into our vision and values.



OUR FOUNDATIONS

The Gospel

“It is not great faith but true faith that saves. And the salvation lies not in the faith but in the Christ in whom faith trusts.”

— C.H. Spurgeon —

Gospel simply means “good news.” In one sense news is simple, but in another sense it’s not. That’s not to imply this good news is difficult; no, all news is profound. Think of a precious diamond or an intricate tapestry. Both are one in substance, yet part of what makes them so beautiful is their many facets or threads. But even these examples fail to adequately express how beautiful-or good-this news really is.

The Gospel – this good news – is ONE story told through many stories that are woven together over thousands of years. It's God's story of His glory and grace. His story is revealed in Scripture through creation, its fall into sin, and God's plan to rescue and redeem His children through His Son, Jesus Christ. In the end, it will be the only story that matters.

How you respond to this story is the most important decision you will ever make. To truly understand your story, you first need to see how it fits into God's story. Whether you have been walking with God for years or have just begun your relationship with Him, enjoy the opportunity to revisit and celebrate this story of good news and how it has changed your life. May your journey call you to a deeper love of Jesus and appreciation for the gift of grace and salvation He offers through faith.

The Gospel is God’s offer of new life by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

GOD – CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

Genesis 1:1-2:24

Life is full of questions. Some are small: What should I wear today? What should I eat for lunch? Which movie should we see?

But some of life's questions are BIG. The kinds that keep us up at night wondering if they have answers that can be known for certain. Questions like ...

- How did I get here? (ORIGIN)

- What is the purpose for my life? (MEANING)
- What will happen when I die? (ETERNITY)
- Who is God? Is He real? Does He love me? (GOD)

To answer these questions and many more, we have to consult a reliable source or we're just relying on our own wisdom or that of others. For us, that reliable source is God's sufficient Word (also referred to as the Bible or Scriptures). We believe that these Scriptures passed down and recorded over many centuries are the inspired, infallible words of God Himself. God's Word is the ultimate standard and source of Truth and is completely trustworthy when rightly interpreted.

For nearly 2000 years, the Scriptures we hold today have undergone extensive debate and scrutiny, painstaking translation, and intensive scholarly research. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." So, God's Word is foundational to our attempt to answer life's most important questions. These four aspects Paul teaches Timothy may be thought of as:

- Teaching (how to think right)
- Reproof (how not to think wrong)
- Correction (how not to act wrong)
- Training in Righteousness (how to act right)²

In the beginning, we read...well... "In the beginning ..." (Genesis 1:1). That's where God's story—at least as it relates to man—starts.

The creation account in Genesis 1 & 2 is often a source of debate, but no matter the interpretation, it declares that everything we know and experience in the physical world came to be by God's hand. God, being the Supreme Being and Creator, made the heavens and the earth for His pleasure and glory. And it was good.

He also made mankind—male and female—"in his own image" (Genesis 1:27), blessed them, and gave them dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28-30). God is Spirit (Genesis 1:2); therefore we, although we've been given physical bodies, are created spiritual beings. This is extremely significant because it speaks to our truest nature—we are created in the

² Rienow, Rob. *Reclaiming the Sufficiency of Scripture*. Nashville: Randall House, 2012.

image of God. As spiritual beings, God created us with a purpose in mind—to be in fellowship with our Creator and to glorify Him forever. We are created by God for His eternal glory.

The good news of the Gospel begins and ends with this truth—we were created to know and glorify a good, gracious, and giving God. However, God's creation and our fellowship with Him was broken, but His plan and glory would not be thwarted.

Reflect on your spiritual journey and discuss.

What is your story of origin? What are the circumstances and significant events surrounding your birth, childhood, and journey into adulthood? Looking back, how do you see God's purposes and glory first unfolding in your life?

SIN – THE FALL

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

Genesis 3:1-24

Throughout the creation account in Genesis 1 & 2, God "saw that it was good." In other words, all that God created-both the world and mankind-was just as He intended it. Good. Flawless. Perfect. But God's perfect creation wouldn't last for long.

Good news is almost always good because there is bad news that precedes it. In this case, the bad news is that God's perfect creation was broken when sin entered the world. This bad news is recorded in Genesis 3.

You don't have to look around very long to see the effects of sin. In case you hadn't noticed, our world is a mess. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, and floods continually remind us that our planet is aching and groaning.

Social disasters like poverty, racism, injustice, and war plague our world. A little closer to home, personal disasters such as disease, accidents, financial difficulty, and fractured relationships add to the chaos of life.

Something's wrong. Very wrong. No matter how you look at it, there is a huge gap between the world we desire and the world we experience. Why?

Sin.

Sin is anything that is contrary to the nature of the One, True, and Holy God. God is supremely good. Flawless. Perfect. But we are not, and neither is this world. We continually fall short of God, His glory, and His original design for life He intended for His perfect creation. And we're keenly aware when we fall short because God has written His moral standards on our hearts (Romans 2:12-16).

"¹²For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. "¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. "¹⁴For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. "¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them "¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." (Romans 2:12-16)

The words for "sin" in both the Old Testament and New Testament are literally translated "missing the mark." Picture a target.

Sometimes we miss the target completely. Other times we miss the bull's eye, even if by just a little. We may hit the bull's eye once in a while, but we miss it way more often than we hit it. No matter how you look at it, we continually fall short of perfection.

The specific consequences of sin can vary greatly, but the universal consequence is fatal. Sin-missing the mark of God's standard-results in spiritual death (Romans 6:23) and eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). The essence of sin is a declaration of "my will be done" versus "Thy will be done." At its core, sin is an uprising against the very God who created us and gave us life.

But the corruption of God's creation by sin didn't catch Him off guard. He had a plan from the beginning to defeat it and put His glory on display.

Reflect on your spiritual journey and discuss.

What was your life like before you encountered Jesus? What were some of the effects of sin in your life? How did God begin to show you that you were "missing the mark" continually?

JESUS CHRIST – LOVE, GRACE & REDEMPTION

"...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, "⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast."
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

Ephesians 2:1-10

After preparing for millennia, God made the final move of His plan of redemption by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah (literally "anointed one"). Jesus came to this world fully God, yet fully man. He lived a sinless life and, in doing so, satisfied God's standard of holiness and righteousness. Despite living this sinless life, Jesus paid the price for the sins of the world by unjustly suffering a brutal punishment and death on an executioner's cross. His blood was shed to satisfy our debt of sin and purchase our pardon. Not only that, but His righteousness was also applied to our account in place of our sinfulness.

Jesus not only defeated sin by dying on the cross, but He also defeated death itself by rising from the grave. Together, the bloody cross and the empty tomb give us victory over both sin and death. This was the culminating act of God's plan of redemption and covenant to save His children. The power of sin and death would reign no longer. God's children had finally been redeemed-bought with a price and granted freedom by the blood of Jesus.

Grace.

Grace is not merely a concept to understand; it is a person to encounter, embrace, and know intimately through a relationship. Jesus is the embodiment of God's grace. He is the means by which God extends His goodness and forgiveness toward every one of us who deserve punishment for our sin. That's the good news of Jesus, the resurrected and victorious King.

In the person of Jesus Christ, God's grace and mercy go hand in hand. Grace is getting what you *don't* deserve and *can't* earn yourself-salvation and eternal life in God's presence. Mercy is *not* getting what you *do* deserve-the consequence for sin, spiritual death and eternal separation from God in Hell. Grace grants forgiveness: mercy forgoes punishment. Grace grants eternal life; mercy forgoes eternal death. They are two sides of the same coin, the currency of God's great love. Grace and mercy. **Jesus.**

It is only by God's grace offered through Jesus Christ that we can be redeemed. But this gift of grace requires a response ...

Reflect on your spiritual journey and discuss.

Reflect on when you finally understood and believed (confessed, accepted) all that Jesus has done for you. How did it feel to finally see God's grace and mercy as gifts He was offering to you?

OUR RESPONSE – FAITH

"...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."
(Romans 10:9)

Romans 10:1-13; 1 John 1:1-10

This gift of grace-salvation, the forgiveness of sin, and eternal life in God's presence-is activated through a personal and genuine faith in Jesus and what He has done on your behalf through the cross and the empty tomb. God extends this gift through Jesus, but it must be accepted personally to effect any true change in your life. Many have found themselves acknowledging the facts about Jesus only to realize they never personally embraced Him, not only as Savior, but as Lord.

Confessing Jesus as both Savior and Lord is not a matter of speaking the right words; it's a matter of the heart (Romans 10:9) and your genuine belief in and commitment to Him. Acknowledging Jesus as Savior means personally confessing your sin and receiving forgiveness through His payment of your penalty-death-on the cross. It also means his righteousness covers your sinfulness and that God sees you just as He sees Jesus.

Acknowledging Jesus as Lord means truly submitting your entire life to His leadership. *Kurios*, the Greek word for "Lord," refers to an owner or master that exercises absolute ownership rights. When you proclaim that Jesus is Lord, it means you are willfully and joyfully laying down your own agenda and life to serve God's higher purposes. You are living for His glory.

Reflect on your spiritual journey and discuss.

Describe the circumstances surrounding your response to God's offer of salvation. Was it one memorable moment or a season of response over an extended period of time? How have you experienced Jesus as Savior How have you experienced Him as Lord?

NEW LIFE – ABUNDANT & ETERNAL

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

"¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. "¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17)

2 Corinthians 5:17-21; John 3:1-8, 15-21, 36; John 10:7-11; John 14:15-21

God created and it was good. The fall of sin broke fellowship between God and man. God initiated the solution. Jesus Christ brought redemption and grace through the cross and the empty tomb. Our response of faith in Jesus activates God's gift of salvation personally and ushers in much more than just a new season ...

It's a new life.

Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in John 3 reveals that this new life—this spiritual rebirth—is only brought forth by the work of God's Spirit. When you give your life to Jesus in response to Him giving His life for yours, you become a new creation altogether (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your old life of bondage to sin and death passes away and a new life of forgiveness and being reconciled to God begins. This doesn't mean that all the circumstances of your life will change immediately or get easier, but it does mean that God's Spirit lives within in you (John 14:17). This new, Spirit-led life empowers you to seek God's purposes and pursue His glory with your life.

Not only are you given new spiritual life in this world (here & now), you are also given eternal life in the age to come (there & then). We are all created in the image of God as eternal spiritual beings, so once our earthly bodies fail and we succumb to death, our spirits *live* on. If you are living apart from Christ upon death, then you will experience eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). If you are living in Christ upon death, then you will experience eternal life in God's presence (John 3:16; 11:25). The book of Revelation paints a *vivid* picture, yet it is just a mere glimpse of what God has in store for those who are in Christ—eternally in His presence as a citizen of His unshakeable Kingdom. The final chapter of God's story is already written, yet still to be told.

Reflect on your spiritual journey and discuss.

What has your life been like since expressing your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? How have you experienced new spiritual life in your daily living? How has having an eternal perspective changed how you live each day?

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S REDEMPTIVE STORY³

Profound, yet simple. Epic, yet intimate. Transcendent, yet personal. Now, yet forever. This is The Gospel—the good news. God's grand story of redemption can be encapsulated by four simple words:

OF

Creation (Genesis 1–2)

The beginning of the story reveals our true Identity. We all are created in the image of God. Our worth, value and dignity doesn't come through performance or merit; it is inherent in our identity as image bearers of God. Everything that was and is good and right—including our intended nature—came of God.

BETWEEN

The Old Testament (Genesis 3–Malachi 4)

This part of the story reveals our separation from God when sin came between God and man kind as well as our failed efforts to bridge that gap. Everything that was right in God's perfect creation was broken because of sin, the most significant consequence being our spiritual death and separation from God.

WITH

The Gospels (Matthew 1–Acts 1)

The corruption of God's creation by sin didn't catch Him off guard. He had a plan from the beginning to defeat it and put His glory on display. This is the part of the story when God came to be with man. Often referred to as the incarnation, God came in the form of His creation: man. Jesus Christ was sent to be with us and to bridge the gap between us and God. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we are invited by grace to be with God. Just as Jesus called those in His days on earth to be with Him, He calls us to do the same.

IN

The rest of the New Testament (Acts 2–Revelation 2)

God came not only to be with us, but to live in us. God's redemptive work of salvation is not only about saving mankind from something – it is about saving us to something. That something is Him. As the Apostle Paul writes to the church in Colossae, *"To them God chose*

³ This section taken from Fellowship Church Knoxville.

to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

Praise be to God for His Gospel of glorious grace!

The Church

"A local church is a mutually-affirming group of new covenant members and kingdom citizens, identified by regularly gathering together in Jesus' name through preaching the gospel and celebrating the ordinances."

— Jonathan Leeman —

"The church is the body of people called by God's grace through faith in Christ to glorify Him together by serving Him in His World."

— Mark Dever —

In both Western culture and modern times, "church" is often thought of as a place. The term is most often used to refer to the physical structure—a building—where a community of faith gathers regularly. While this is common and accepted language in our culture, it could not be further from the reality of God's Church and all He has designed it to be.

So, it is important that we have a clear and correct understanding of ecclesiology—the doctrine (or teaching) of the Church. What is it? How does it function? What purpose does it have in the world today? These questions and more are so important since the Church is the most visible aspect of Christianity in our world today.

THE CHURCH DEFINED

Like the Gospel, the Church is both simple and profound. The two quotes at the top of the previous page give clear, concise definitions for the Church, yet there is so much more that defines it. The New Testament, especially the book of Acts and several of Paul's letters to various churches, gives great insight into the early Church and what God has designed it to be.

Acts is an account of the birth, growth, and expansion of the Church throughout the Roman Empire (and ultimately beyond) in the first several decades after Jesus' resurrection. Paul's

and others' letters give even deeper insight into how God's people interacted with each other and the world.

Here are four key truths about the Church:

1. *Jesus Christ is the Foundation and the Head*

First and foremost, it must be recognized that the Church is built on the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of the One True God and Savior of the world, and his charge to carry his Gospel to our world. He is the cornerstone, its very foundation. The Church, then, is comprised of all who genuinely believe in Jesus, trust Him alone for salvation, and follow whole-heartedly by serving God's Kingdom and glory. Since the Church is built on the foundation of Jesus, he alone functions as its head.

"For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

"¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, "²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, "²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. "²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19–22)

"¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. "¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." (Colossians 1:17–18)

2. *Fellowship of Believers*

The Greek word in the New Testament from which "church" is derived is *ekklesio*. It was a common term that literally meant "assembly" or "gathering." Over time, "church" came to describe the assembly or gathering of God's people in worship, teaching, prayer, fellowship, and ministry to one another. The way they pursued community and embraced the charge to live out the Gospel together bore testimony to the world around them. Many heard about Jesus and followed Him as Savior and Lord as a result. His Church still bears the same charge today.

"⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. "⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. "⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. "⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. "⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, "⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."
(Acts 2:42-47)

3. *Invisible, Yet Visible*

One great mystery of the Church is that it is invisible, yet visible. It is invisible in the sense that it is the spiritual reality of all genuine believers and followers of Christ. While one can visibly see who attends a church and even see outward evidence of a life submitted to Christ, no one can assess the true spiritual condition of a person's heart. The invisible Church is the Church as only God can see it. The Church is visible in the sense that the true followers of Jesus are empowered by God's Spirit to walk in faith, bear fruit for his Kingdom, and make disciples of others. The visible Church is the Church as followers of Christ on earth can see it and its evidence.

"²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."
(Matthew 7:21)

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

4. *Universal, Regional, and Local*

The Church is God's chosen method to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ known to the entire world. Since its founding by Jesus, it has existed and continues to exist in many different expressions. The broadest expression of the Church encompasses all true believers across all time and all places. In this sense, the Church is universal. There are often many fellowships of the Church within a country or city that can collectively be referred to as the regional church. Finally, a specific fellowship of believers is commonly referred to as a local church. Local churches can vary in size, from just a few people to several thousand.

"²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church [**universal**], "²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22–23)"

³¹So the church [**regional**] throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied." (Acts 9:31)

"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church [**local**] of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

METAPHORS FOR THE CHURCH

Scripture uses many metaphors to describe the nature of the Church and how it functions. Although there are many to be explored, the book of Ephesians highlights two which are especially significant:

1. *The Church is a Family*

At conversion, we are birthed with new life in Christ into a spiritual family. Followers of Jesus, especially in a local church, are brothers and sisters who worship their Heavenly Father and serve His Kingdom together. Just as a natural family shares many things (last name, a home, experiences, etc.), the church as a spiritual family does as well. We share "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:5-6). We also share the same mission—to live out the Gospel together, or *to live out what it means to be wholehearted followers of Christ*—and inheritance, which is eternal life with our Heavenly Father.

In becoming a member of this spiritual family, the local church, we have a place—and more importantly a people—of belonging. We are no longer spiritual orphans. We are adopted by the Father as his children, fellow heirs with Christ, and brothers and sisters in the family of faith .

"¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" "¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, "¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,

provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."
(Romans 8:15–17)

"and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:18)

"he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," (Ephesians 1:5)

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." (1 John 3:16)

2. *The Church is a Body*

The Church is also a body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. A body is one, yet it has many parts. Each part is unique and has a distinct purpose. In order for the body to be healthy, effective, and function properly, each part must fulfill its unique role. In the same way, the Church is a body—the Body of Christ.

We are one. yet many. Each of us has been given unique gifts and capabilities that, when working together, allow the body to function the way it was designed. Therefore, every member is called to bring his or her unique gifts and talents to serve the mission of the Church.

"¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, "¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," (Ephesians 4:11–12)

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12)

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

OUR CALLING

Mission, Vision, Values, and Shifts

Mission

To reach, teach, and live out what it means to be wholehearted followers of Christ.

REACH

Prayerful awareness of those around us and what the Lord may be doing in their life through us.

“...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,” (Ephesians 6:18, ESV)

Intentional living, knowing that God has chosen to use **people** to bring the gospel to others.

“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.” (1 Corinthians 9:19, ESV)

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.” (1 Corinthians 9:22–24, ESV)

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” (Colossians 4:5–6, ESV)

Actively serving others through love, knowing that meeting others’ needs is often a means God uses to open their eyes.

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13, ESV)

TEACH

Gathered Worship

ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) means church/gathering. Consider what Jesus says in Matthew 18:20 (a verse that finishes off a short passage about the local church): “**For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.**”

On earth, as in heaven, the church **assembles around** Jesus, who is the Head (and Shepherd) of the Church.

“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” (Colossians 1:17–18, ESV)

The local church isn’t a piece of the heavenly church—like a tiny chunk broken off a big cookie. **Instead, it’s a miniature realization of the whole heavenly Church.**

- We teach **by** gathering.
- We teach the Word **in** our gathering.
- We **see** the gospel through our gathering.

The local church is a **miniature realization** of the whole heavenly Church.

Community Fellowship

Brings together two words that are loaded with meaning.

- Community is the **togetherness** and **commitment** Christians experience that transcend all natural bonds.
- Fellowship is the **participation**, sharing with/joining together in activities/sacrifice/suffering with the Holy Spirit and other believers that move the gospel inward (deeper in our lives) and outward (so that it affects the lost).

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with

which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Ephesians 1:1–10, ESV)

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,” (Ephesians 1:15, ESV)

“so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 3:10, ESV)

“because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:5, ESV)

Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship

“And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”” (Mark 1:17, ESV)

“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 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.”” (Matthew 28:18–20, ESV)

“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2, ESV)

LIVE OUT what it means to be a wholehearted follower of Christ.

Walking by the Spirit

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not

under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (Galatians 5:16–26, ESV)

Faith in Action

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:14–17, ESV)

Pursuing Spiritual Growth

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:8–14, ESV)

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any

means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.” (Philippians 3:8-16, ESV)

Values

Christ-centered

Jesus is the center of all we say and do as we strive to help one another become more like Christ by ministering God’s truth and grace.

Biblical

The Bible is God’s all-sufficient source of truth and wisdom for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and His mission for His people is fully revealed in the Bible. We are to be increasingly transformed by renewing our minds (Romans 12:1-2) so our lives are conformed to living on mission with God.

Prayerful

As we seek first God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:33), we’ll increasingly walk by the Spirit rather than gratifying the desires of the flesh (Galatians 6:15). Prayer is God’s chosen means for helping His people glorify and thank Him, and seek His wisdom and guidance in tandem with the Word.

Relational

As an ambassadorial outpost for God’s kingdom, the church is to be a culture of care, much like a spiritual hospital. We do this by accepting people where they are in life, loving them through purposeful relationship ministering the approximately 50 one-anothers.

Gift-based

God gives spiritual gifts to equip us to glorify God for the common good of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 14:12; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Spiritual gifts reveal our dependence upon the wisdom of the Spirit as He weaves the local body of Christ together, and humility as we ministry side-by-side.

Shifts

Information ► Transformation

An informed mind is good, but a transformed heart is much better. Much of Christianity is rooted in “here is what you are supposed *to do*,” but the Gospel is so much more. Jesus cares about the “why”—namely the motivations of the heart. *We are shifting from merely knowing to knowing AND being AND doing.*

Outreach events ► Everyday ordinary encounters

Disciple-making is so much more than a program; it’s a relational process. The greatest impact we can make is where we live, work and play every day. *By seeing disciple-making as something that happens in everyday, ordinary encounters, we are shifting from event-drive outreach to relationship-driven disciple-making.*

Problem-solving ► Journeying together

Jesus’ first words to His disciples were, “Follow Me.” He didn’t give them a long list of behaviors to fix or change; He simply called them to follow Him. Jesus knew that if they spent time following Him, He would change them from the inside out. *The Gospel compels us to see people not as problems to be fixed, but friends to love and journey together with.*

Telling ► Listening

In the Gospels, we frequently find Jesus asking people questions and then listening to their stories. Proverbs 20:5 says, “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” Jesus—the Son of God, the Way, the Truth, and the Life—didn’t just talk, but He listened. As the perfect man of understanding, He asked questions which drew out the purposes of men’s hearts. *When we shift to a listen first posture, we demonstrate that we care more about people than just what we have to tell them.*

Doing ministry *for* ► Doing ministry *with*

It's significantly easier to do something for someone, but it's almost always better to do something with someone. Ministry partnerships where the vision is owned and shared create the longest and most rewarding outcomes. *By shifting to doing ministry with people, we create environments where growth, dignity, and purpose flourish.*

Church as a *place to attend* ► Church as a *people to belong to*

Jesus never intended for His Church to be a physical location or a weekend activity. His Church is a people to belong to, a spiritual family of faith, a disciple-making movement. The Church is about our relationships to our Heavenly Father and to each other, not buildings and events. *We are shifting from church being a place you attend to a people you belong to.*

Inviting people to *church* ► Inviting people to *Christ*

Jesus is the hope of the world—not a pastor, not a church, not a program. Jesus is hope! And hope is a person—Jesus! *We are shifting to become a disciple-making movement where every follower of Jesus is empowered and equipped to multiply their faith through relationships.*

Spiritual Gifts

One of the ways we can connect with God is to participate with him as he grows and advances his kingdom (Romans 12:4–6). God made each of us with a unique set of talents, passions, and spiritual gifts. He wants us to use those gifts to benefit others because when we do so we reflect his love to the people around us.

What the Bible Says About Spiritual Gifts

Four passages in the New Testament talk about spiritual gifts:

"⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; "⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; "⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:6–8)"

"¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, "¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, "¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (Ephesians 4:11–13)

"⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. "⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, "⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, "¹⁰to 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. "¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." (1 Corinthians 12:7–11)"

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: "¹¹whoever 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 4:10–11)

Definitions

Here are general definitions of some of the gifts mentioned in the Bible, but there are varied opinions on these definitions.

1. Administration: advancing the work of God by planning, organizing, executing procedures, and supervising others.
2. Evangelism: delivering the gospel to others in a way that consistently helps them trust Christ.
3. Exhortation: ministering to others through encouraging, comforting, and using wise counsel to help them become more like Jesus.
4. Giving: generously and cheerfully sharing money and resources without expecting anything in return.
5. Hospitality: making other people—even strangers—feel welcome and cared for in your home or church.
6. Leadership: helping shape the direction of a group in a way that motivates others to get involved and move in the same direction.
7. Mercy: being sensitive to those who are suffering; feeling genuine sympathy and empathy, then caring for them with loving words and actions.
8. Pastoring: spiritually caring for, protecting, and guiding a group of believers toward spiritual maturity.
9. Serving: taking joy from performing any act of service motivated by genuine love for God and others.
10. Teaching: being able to understand biblical truths and then instructing others in a way that inspires learning, application, and growth.
11. Wisdom: applying spiritual truths practically in decision-making and daily life.
12. *Discerning Spirits: discerning with complete accuracy what is true and what is false.
13. *Faith: living boldly and sometimes taking radical action as a result of deep trust in God (this is distinct from the trust in God and Christ that is true of all believers).
14. *Healing: supernaturally restoring a physical body back to health.
15. *Interpreting Tongues: understanding a foreign language with no training, then communicating the message to others.
16. *Miracles: performing an act that includes God's intervention into laws of nature.

17. *Prophecy: receiving direct revelation from God and then communicating the message to others.

18. *Speaking in Tongues: being able to speak in a foreign or unknown language with no training. This is different from praying in tongues as Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 14:14-19.

*Oak Grove believe these gifts are no longer normative in the life of the local church. They were necessary to authenticate Jesus' work of during and immediately after his earthly ministry in the establishment of the churches through the Apostles. That they are no longer normative does not limit God from using them according to His wisdom, within the parameters we see them described in Scripture. For our purposes, this assessment only focuses on gifts we believe to be normative and active today.

Discussion

1. Before this assessment, how aware were you of spiritual gifts?
2. What did you learn about your spiritual gifts from taking the assessment?
3. How accurate do you think your assessment results were? Explain.
4. To what extent are you currently using your spiritual gifts to benefit the church and other people?
5. What is one thing you can do to better utilize your spiritual gifts? How can this group support you?

OUR DISTINCTIVES

Entering into *meaningful membership* as a partner in the Gospel is an important decision that should be informed by an adequate understanding of how a local church functions. This ensures agreement on matters that otherwise may lead to conflict and disunity.

So, what makes Oak Grove Church unique? What practices of faith does Oak Grove observe and what do they mean? What is the leadership structure and how are decisions made? How are Oak Grove's ministries organized? How does the church handle conflict and address outward sin?

While there are certainly many things we share with other like-minded Gospel-centered churches, there are others that set Oak Grove apart. It's important that you understand these practical and philosophical distinctives as you make your decision:

Theological Triage in Pursuit of Unity and Disagreement with Charity⁵ —

First Tier: Doctrines that are most central and essential to the Christian faith, and a denial of one of one of these doctrines represents something of an eventual denial of Christianity itself.

Full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ • The Trinity • The Authority of the Word of

Second Tier: Essential to church life and necessary for the ordering of the local church, but which, in themselves, do not define the Gospel. Doctrinal distinctions which often shape our denominational boundaries.

Ecclesiology: Church Leadership & Polity • Administration of the Ordinances: Mode of Baptism & The Lord's Supper

Third Tier: Doctrines over which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations.

Order of Salvation • Order of end times events • Preferred Bible Translation(s) • Age of the Earth (Young Earth or Old Earth)

⁵ <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/> and Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage*, The Gospel Coalition Booklet Series. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

Statement of Faith

*Core Beliefs (First-Tier Beliefs)*⁶

Scripture

We believe that the Bible in its original writings is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, eternal Word of God. The Bible is essential for training in righteousness and is the complete revelation of God's will for the salvation of mankind and the Divine and final authority for Christian faith and life. (Matt. 24:35; John 10:35; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

The Godhead

We believe that there is one God eternally existent in three persons, each of whom is coeternal and coequal (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - commonly called the Trinity).

We believe in God the Father, who is sovereign over all things, creator of the universe, revealed to mankind as unchanging, all-knowing, all-powerful, all loving and always present. (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 90:2, 139:7-12, 16; Matt. 19:26; Rom. 1:20; James 1:17; 1 John 3:20; Rev. 19:6).

We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, fully God and fully man, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. He was totally holy by virtue of His miraculous birth and sinless life. Jesus voluntarily laid down His life, the just dying for the unjust, making it possible for man to be saved. He rose bodily from the dead on the third day after death, providing salvation for all who believe in His atoning sacrifice and is now seated at the right hand of the Father and will one day return to establish His earthly kingdom. (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14, 18; 2:19; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 10:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil 2:5-8; 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 4:15; 7:25; 8:1; 9:14, 28; 1 Pet. 3:18).

We believe in God the Holy Spirit who lives in all believers at the moment they are regenerated (born again), guiding and teaching Biblical truth, regenerating and empowering them to live a life of godliness. He bestows spiritual gifts to all believers, and that these gifts are to be used for the edification and perfecting of the believers in the church. He convicts the world of sin and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 14:16, 17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-14; Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 8:14; 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12-14; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 3:16; 4:7-16; Titus 3:5; Heb. 2:3-4)

⁶ Oak Grove Constitution and Bylaws, updated April 3, 2011, Article III, Section B.

Mankind

We believe that God created man and woman in His likeness, free of sin and able to have intimate fellowship with God. (Gen.1:26-27; 2:7)

We believe that all of humanity fell away from God when Adam first sinned, and that the fall resulted in both physical and spiritual death for man. In this fallen condition, man was left totally depraved and unable to remedy his own situation. (Gen. 3:1-13; Isa. 53:6; John 3:3; Rom. 3:23, 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Eph. 2)

Sin

We believe that sin is anything that does not conform to the character and nature of God. It is falling short of His glory - missing the mark of His perfection - through negligence, unfaithfulness and willfully crossing boundaries set by God. (Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:10; James 4:17; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:4)

We believe that all mankind sinned in Adam, the head of the human race, and that each human being has a sin nature, and also has committed personal sin. (Rom. 1:18; 3:23; 5:12; 1 John 1:8-10)

Salvation

We believe that God provided the only means for reconciliation to Himself by allowing His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the sacrifice for our sins by His death upon the cross.

We believe that salvation is the act of God whereby man is brought into a proper relationship with God. It is that act where spiritually dead man is made spiritually alive (Ps.3:8; John 2:9; Eph. 2:1-2).

We believe that this is accomplished by the grace of God through mans' faith in the death (shed blood), burial, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-10).

We believe Jesus fulfilled every aspect of God's righteous requirements in the Law. He conquered death by His bodily resurrection, thus fulfilling His claim to be God's Son. In this way, He bridged the gap closing our separation from God. His resurrection gives us the assurance that we will also be resurrected "IF" we trust that His death paid for our sins (John 1:12-12, 3:16, 5:28-29; Rom. 5:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Thess.4:16, 17; Rev. 20:12-15).

We believe the Holy Spirit reveals the truth of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ by convicting the individual of sin, the need for repentance, and a personal faith in Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord.

We believe that salvation involves three things for the believer: deliverance from the penalty of sin at the moment of regeneration; victory over the power of sin during the Christian life; and deliverance from the presence of sin at glorification.

We believe that salvation positionally sanctifies the believer and is known as justification, but that the believer needs to experience growth in his daily life, which is known as progressive sanctification (Rom. 6:14; 2 cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:20-21).

We believe that the expression of salvation is exhibited by the act of a Believer's baptism by emersion.

Essential Beliefs (Second & Third Tier Doctrines)

Satan and Angels

We believe in the existence of the person of Satan. He was created by God as the greatest of angels, but later rebelled against God. After he fell, he organized his own kingdom, which consists of both evil angels and unregenerate man. He is currently the ruler god of this age. Satan's ultimate goal is to overthrow God. He seeks to keep the unsaved from becoming saved. He seeks to hinder and destroy the Christian's testimony and ministry for God.

We believe that both Satan and his evil angels will be consigned to the eternal Lake of Fire after the Millennium (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; Mt. 25:41; Jn. 8:44; Rev. 20:7-10).

We believe that there is an innumerable host of angels who remained faithful and true to God. They are servants to the Most High God and are ministering spirits to those who are heirs of salvation (Ps. 91:11-12; Mt. 4:6; Acts 12:7-10; Rev. 7:11).

The Church

We believe that the true church is a universal, invisible, living organism and that it is the "body of Christ" who is Himself the head of this body. The Universal Church is made up of regenerate, redeemed believers only. (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18)

We believe the church began on the day of Pentecost; that every believer is indwelt/baptized by the Holy Spirit into the one body of Christ, which is the Universal Church. (John 14:16-17; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 12:13)

We believe there are many local churches which are made up of those regenerate, redeemed believers who desire the fellowship that Christ is building, based upon the foundation of faith in His nature and His saving work.

We believe the local churches are called to be distinct from the world while in it, called to grow in Christlikeness, called to edify fellow believers to maturity, called to acclaim to the world God's offer of everlasting life and to be the visible representation of the body of Christ in the local community. (Matt. 16:16-18, 28:19-20; John 17:6,9,11; Acts 2:46-47; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 1:2, 12:13, 27; 14; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:11-16; Col. 1:18)

The Ordinances: Baptism and Communion

We believe in the command of Christ, confirmed by His example, to be baptized in water by immersion, for those who have received faith in Him, in order that they might be fully identified with Christ. Baptism then is an example of obedience and a testimony of the change which the Spirit has accomplished in their hearts (Matt. 3:12-15; 28:19-20; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21; Col. 2:12).

We believe in the command of Christ to remember His sacrifice and eternal communion with Him by regular observance of His last supper, and by partaking of His chosen symbols, the bread and the cup, which represent His broken body and shed blood (Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-34).

Spiritual Gifts

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in His wisdom and according to His good pleasure, has bestowed "gift(s) of grace" on all believers in Christ, for the purpose of equipping them for ministry and bringing about maturity of faith and unity in Christ's church. These gifts are to be used in accordance with God's expressed will as revealed in His Word.

However, we believe that some of these gifts mentioned in Scripture—popularly known as "sign gifts", tongues, prophecy, miracles, healings, etc.—were primarily manifested in the age of the apostles and were for the purpose of confirming apostleship and giving authority of their writings, i.e., Scripture. Since, the age of the apostles has passed and the Scriptures are complete, we believe the sign gifts as manifested in the first century are extremely rare and should be evaluated within their original intent of confirming God's message and messenger, for the sole purpose of advancing the Gospel in areas where the name "Jesus"

has not been heard (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:7, 11-12; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Return of Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven, His present work as intercessor, the pre-tribulation rapture of His Church, and His personal, bodily, pre-millennial, imminent return (Matt. 24:36; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Rom. 8:34; 1 Th. 4:13-17; 5:6; Titus 2:13; 1 John 2:28).

We believe that, following the Rapture of the Church, the seven-year Tribulation Period (Daniel's 70th week, or the Time of Jacob's Trouble) will take place. (Daniel. 9:24-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

We believe that following the Tribulation, the Millennium will begin. It will be brought about by the literal, physical, visible, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth to rule and to reign for one thousand years. After the Millennium, those who refused the grace of God in accepting the penalty of their sin being paid by Jesus Christ on the cross, will be judged and eternally punished, while those who placed their faith in His person and His work will share in His eternal joy (Zech. 14:1-4; John 3:16; Rev. 19-20).

Israel

We believe that Israel is God's chosen national people. In His sovereign will, Israel serves as a channel of His blessing to the entire world for His glory, and His witness to the nations. God's election of Israel for this unique relationship is unchangeable. Israel is distinct from the church and central to God's plan for all ages (past, present and future). The unfulfilled prophecies given to Israel in the Old Testament will find their final literal fulfillment in Israel at a future time (Gen. 12:1-3; 28:13; Ps. 105:6-10; Isa. 43:7,10; Rom. 9-11).

Leadership

The New Testament says quite a bit about church leadership and governance, but it is not particularly prescriptive about its structure. One thing that is clear, though, is Jesus Christ is both the foundation and Head (Primary Shepherd) of His Church.

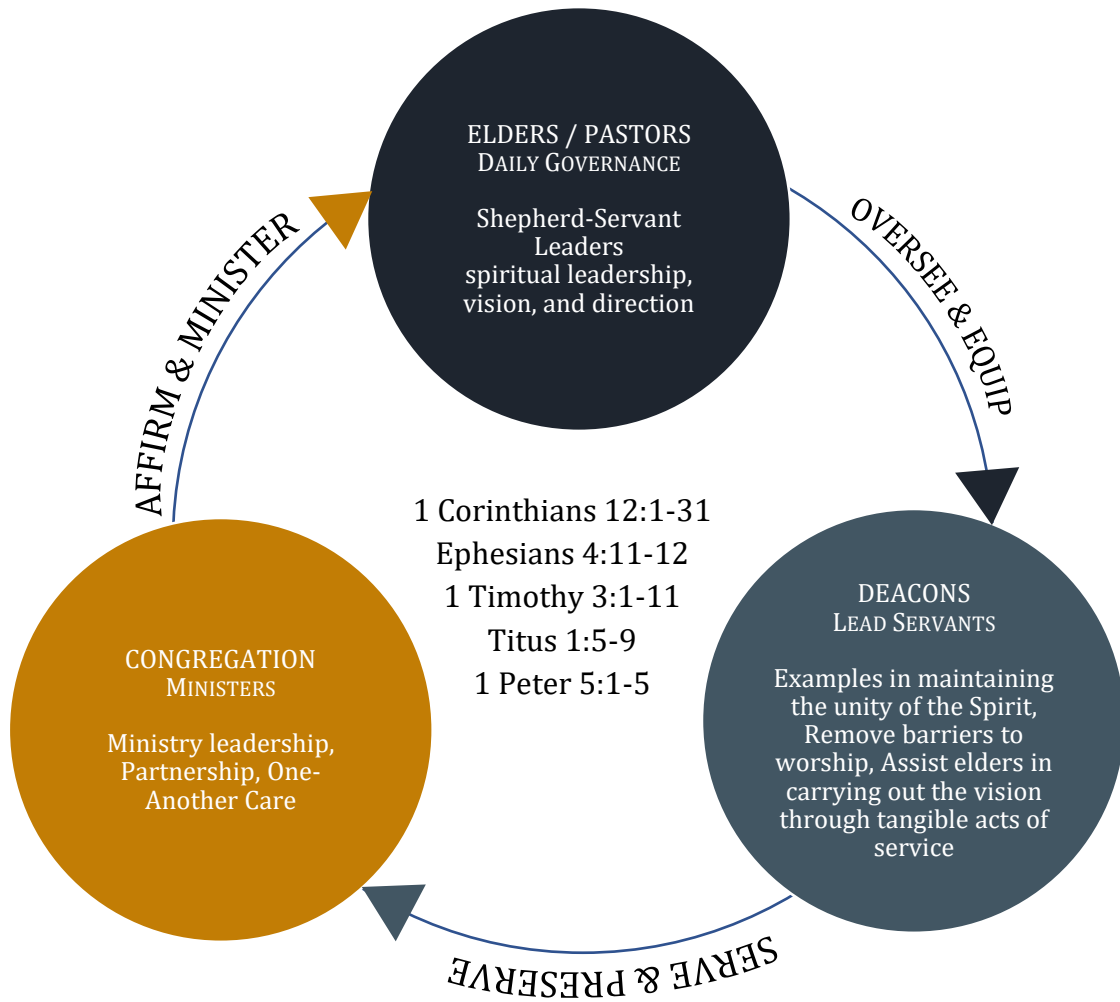
"For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

"¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. "¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." (Colossians 1:17-18)

"¹⁵...Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, "¹⁶from 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)

With Jesus Christ firmly established as the foundation and head of His Church, the leadership structure and governance of a local church can vary and still be within the parameters of Scripture. Aside from the oversight and servant leadership of a plurality of elders, there isn't one clearly defined structure, so there can be many models of church governance. Any given model that fits within the parameters of Scripture can thrive with healthy leadership and function well, or it can suffer from poor leadership and dysfunction. Some models are unbiblical altogether, so we must look to the Scriptures for the guidance and wisdom necessary for healthy leadership and ministry.

Here is a visual summary of Oak Grove's leadership structure and some guiding passages of Scripture:



Restoration & Discipline

Church Discipline - Restoration, Reconciliation, & Training in Righteousness

God, in His infinite wisdom and understanding of the human heart, has given the Body of Christ a way to deal with sin in the lives of believers and in His Church. This way is also the principal means by which He maintains the unity, power, purity and integrity of His Church and historically has been considered by believers as one of the primary marks of the true Church. It is referred to as church discipline.

John Calvin, writing in his *Institutes*, says, "*Those who think that the church can stand for long without this bond of discipline are mistaken; unless by chance we can afford to omit that support which the Lord foresaw would be necessary for us.*"

Church discipline is a broad topic. From the widest perspective it can be thought of as the "how" of living together in community; specifically, a community of believers known as Christ's Church. From a narrower perspective it is the aspect of living together in regard to the correct response to wrong behaviors and/or wrong thinking. Wrong behavior or thinking is sin and sin cannot be ignored in the Body of Christ. How we address this sin is the "discipline" of which we speak. Discipline in this sense is not only corrective, which is but a small part, but much more encompassing, consisting of training that refines, molds or perfects. This type of discipline places us in partnership with the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification and "training in righteousness" in the lives of those with whom the Lord has placed us in community. It is the principle of "iron sharpening iron." This discipline is a mutual responsibility we have toward each other. It is not presented as an option in Scripture.

The elders and pastors Oak Grove Church desire that our local body be a community of believers who live together in a way that honors God, encourages and edifies one another and is a strong testimony to the world of the power, grace and truth of the Lord Jesus. We have tried to glean from Scripture and compile here the principles and precepts of Christian community that specifically deal with the handling of sin and offense between brothers and sisters in Christ

and in the local church.

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you

too be tempted. "2Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."
(Galatians 6:1-2)

"15"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. "16But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. "17If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. "18Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. "19Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. "20For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."" (Matthew 18:15-20)

By entering into meaningful membership as a partner in the Gospel at Oak Grove Church, you are placing yourself in a Christian community that takes seriously the charge to gently and appropriately confront sin, seek restoration and reconciliation, and pursue training in righteousness.

Questions to Ask Before Joining a Local Church⁷

1. Is this a church where God's Word is faithfully and valued as sufficient for all of life and godliness?
2. Is this a church where sound doctrine matters?
3. How does this church view the ordinances (baptism and communion)?
4. Is this a church where the gospel is cherished and clearly proclaimed?
5. Is this a church where my family will experience meaningful Christian fellowship and grace-based accountability?
6. Is this church a true community of believers who honestly confront sin and give grace?
7. Is this a church committed to reaching non-Christians with the gospel?
8. Is this a church whose leaders are characterized by humility and integrity?
9. Is this a church where I can find and cultivate godly relationships?
10. Is this a church where members are challenged to serve?
11. Is the doctrinal statement of the church clear and precise? If the statement of faith is unclear, could this reveal an intentional ambiguity by the leadership?
12. What is the main preaching philosophy of the leadership? Is it based on an expository or topical methodology?
13. Does the church practice church discipline? Are there any instances of church discipline on record in the last 10 years of the church's existence?
14. Is it too easy to join and too easy to leave this local church? Is there a membership class or any other requirement to fulfill prior to becoming a member?
15. How is the music ministry of the church used? Is it a tool for worship and discipleship or is the music ministry geared toward an entertainment approach?
16. What is the church government structure? Is the church led by one CEO pastor or a plurality of pastors?
17. Is the preaching of the church aimed at the heart and the head? Do the pastors of the church expect the members to engage the mind in worship?
18. What is the temperature of the church in regard to local and international missions? How involved is the church in missions?
19. How does the pastor address unbelievers in his weekly sermons? Does he seem to be too focused on the unbelievers or does he strike a good balance between feeding the sheep and proclaiming the gospel to the unbelievers?
20. Does the church have a ministry to children and youth? Who leads those areas of ministry? Are the men who lead in these areas mature and godly or do they appear to be perpetual adolescents?

⁷ Some questions taken from <https://g3min.org/questions-ask-join-local-church/>.

21. Is the church led by male leadership? Is the church *complementarian* or *egalitarian*?
How is this conviction put on display in the leadership of the church?
22. Does the pastor give an open public invitation to respond to the sermon at the end of his sermon? How is that conducted? Is there any hint of manipulation involved?
23. Does the church have a culture of disciple making?
24. How is the church challenged and encouraged in their giving?
25. Does the church seem to be committed to laboring to love one another?
26. What is the church's position on marriage, divorce, and homosexuality?
27. Does the church have a traditional Sunday school or a small group discipleship ministry that meets off campus? Why has the church gone in their chosen direction?
28. Does the church have a church covenant? What exactly does the covenant bind the members to?
29. How often does the church observe the Lord's Supper? Is the Lord's Supper open, closed, or close communion?
30. How many prayers are offered per service? What is the specific purpose of each prayer?
31. What priority does Scripture have in the worship service? Does the church practice a weekly Scripture reading? How is that organized and who reads the passages? What place is it in the service?

INFORMATION

The path to involvement starts with being informed. On Sundays, we feature certain opportunities, but we have several effective channels of communication we use to keep people updated on what's happening at Oak Grove and how to connect:

Website: oakgrove.cc

Church Management System (Online Directory):

Login: ogc.breezechms.com

Create Account: ogc.breezechms.com/login/create (If we already have your email in our database you can create an account. Otherwise, call the church office.)

Social Media:

Facebook: facebook.com/OakGroveOnline/

Instagram: instagram.com/OakGroveOnline

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/oak-grove-church/

Twitter: twitter.com/OakGroveOnline

YouTube: youtube.com/c/OakGroveChurch/

Church Office

6101 32nd Ave., Shellsburg, IA 52332

Phone: 319-453-2065

Email Addresses:

hi@oakgrove.cc

elders@oakgrove.cc

deacons@oakgrove.cc

We exist to reach, teach, and live out what it means
to be wholehearted followers of Christ.



Oak Grove Church
6101 32nd Ave
Shellsburg, IA 52332
(319) 453-2065
hi@oakgrove.cc
www.oakgrove.cc