



S O J O U R N

**Covenant Membership
Handbook**

Introduction

We're humbled and excited by your interest in covenant membership here at Sojourn, and we hope this class is edifying and informative. This handbook is designed to give you a comprehensive look at our church, from top to bottom, inside and out. If you think we've left something out, if there's something this handbook fails to address, please feel free to ask your questions. Our goal is to send you home today with a full understanding of who we are, what we believe, how we organize, who we partner with, and what we hope to see God do.

This handbook is divided into 5 sections:

- Introduction: our name / mission/vision / core convictions
- Gospel: what we believe
- Church: who we are / how we organize
- Mission: what we're called to do / the Sojourn Collective
- Next Steps & Appendix: membership covenant / foundational documents

Our Name

We named our church Sojourn as a reminder that our time here on Earth is in fact temporary. Our lives are a brief pilgrimage towards a divine destination. For the Sojourner, death is no longer a source of fear because we're convinced that death will carry us across the threshold of our true and eternal home.

Until that day, we are dual citizens. We are exiles commissioned into the kingdom of man to demonstrate and declare the reality of the Kingdom of God. We are the ambassadors of a "holy nation," joining our King in the redemption of people and culture through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, "Sojourn" is not just a name. It represents a manner of living.

From *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs:

"When you are at sea, though you have not as many things as you have at home, you are not troubled at it; you are contented. Why? Because you are at sea. You are not troubled when storms arise, and though many things are otherwise than you would have them at home you are still quieted with the fact that you are at sea. When sailors are at sea they do not care what clothes they have, though they are pitched and tarred, and but a clout about their necks, and any old clothes. They think of when they come home: then they shall have their fine silk stockings and suits, and laced bands, and such things, and shall be very fine. So they are contented while away with the thought that it shall be different when they come home, and though they have nothing but salt meat and a little hard fare, yet when

they come to their houses, then they shall have anything. Thus it should be with us in this world, for the truth is, we are all in this world but as seafaring men, tossed up and down on the waves of the sea of this world, and our haven is heaven; here we are traveling and our home is a distant home in another world... Consider what your condition is; you are not yet at home. You are sojourners and exiles; so do not think to satisfy yourselves here."

This quote was also the inspiration behind Sojourn's logo featuring an anchor. We are a sojourning people, a people at sea. But we hold fast to hope in a future home, and that hope is "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (Hebrews 6:19). Even as we sojourn, we are steadfast in Christ.

Mission/Vision Statement

Joining the Father, Son, and Spirit in the historic work of redemption...

We hope to see the people of God united under their identity in Jesus, making disciples of their neighbors by building relationships, exposing them to the Christian community, and sharing the gospel in word and deed.

We hope to see a family of multiplying Neighborhood Parishes equipping the saints, empowering new leaders, and sending new parishes until each neighborhood is saturated with gospel presence.

We hope to see a family of churches laboring together to plant new churches in new neighborhoods and new cities, each joining the historic work of redemption in their local context.

We hope to see the gospel of Jesus Christ spread to the far corners of the earth, establishing local, national, and international ministry partnerships for the glory of God, the growth of the Church, and the good of the nations.



We often summarize the vision statement above as follows: Make Disciples, Multiply Parishes, and Plant Churches.

Make Disciples

We believe God is the One who saves, but we also believe He graciously invites us into the process! So what does it really mean to make a disciple? There is no formula, but that's not to suggest that we have no way of measuring our faithfulness. Thus, so long as Sojourn's Covenant Members are (1) building relationships, (2) exposing those relationships to the

Christian community, and (3) sharing the gospel, we should sleep well knowing that we're being faithful to God's most fundamental call on our lives. Even when our efforts aren't fruitful, we have a definition for what it means to be faithful.

Multiply Parishes

Parish leadership can be a daunting endeavor, so Sojourn's Elders have sought to simplify the role into three essential functions: (1) equipping the saints, (2) sharing leadership, and (3) planning to send. So whether a parish sees 3,000 people saved in a day or goes a decade without multiplying even once, Parish Leaders are able to rest well as good and faithful servants.

Plant Churches

In addition to making disciples and helping to multiply parishes, our Pastors (Elders) and Church Planting Residents oversee the church planting process. To that end, we are committed to (1) bold recruitment, (2) holistic development, and (3) generous sending.

As this class will make clear, we believe that aiming our time and resources at developing healthy Neighborhood Parishes is the most effective way to ensure that (1) disciples are made and (2) churches are planted. Disciples are made within the parish, and churches are planted through the parish.

Our Core Convictions

Sojourn is built upon three essential pillars that shape our lives together: Gospel, Church, and Mission. We seek to define the church in light of: (1) who Jesus is and what He has done, (2) who He has called and created us to be, and (3) what He has saved and sent us to do. These pillars are summarized below, and they'll function as the basic outline of this membership curriculum.

Gospel: Who is God, and what has He done?

Although Jesus is God, he humbly took on flesh (Philippians 2:6-8), lived the life we should have lived, and died the death we should have died (1 Peter 2:24). His bodily resurrection from the dead proved His sacrifice acceptable before God (1 Corinthians 15:3-9). We want this message to saturate everything, from our songs and sermons to our homes and everyday conversations. We want our gospel-saturated churches to shape gospel-saturated neighborhoods.

Church: Who has God called and created us to be?

The Church is more often defined by what she does than by who she is, which means we tend towards a man-centered understanding of the Church. But we are the Church because the Father has chosen us and given us a new identity, not according to who we are or what we've

done, but according to who God is and what He's done. We've been called by Him to live holy lives marked by freedom, proclaiming the excellencies of our King and His Kingdom of light (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Mission: What has God saved and sent us to do?

We not only find our identity in the person and work of Jesus, we find our purpose in Him as well. The Church is saved and sent to proclaim the good news that God sent His Son to redeem the world and create a new humanity (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). Until then, God is in the process of saving a people and sending them out for His mission to exalt Christ in all things.

The Church is God's people,
Saved by God's power,
And sent for God's purposes.

These three pillars sustain everything we do in our church. Each is essential. If we get the gospel but leave out the church and the mission, we are nothing more than a theological seminary. If we get the church but leave out the gospel and the mission, we are nothing more than a country club. If we get the mission but leave out the gospel and the church, we are nothing more than a social activist group.

The remainder of this curriculum is meant to describe these three pillars in detail.

GOSPEL

Who is God, and what has He done?

Gospel Christianity is the announcement of a victory won on our behalf by King Jesus, which we have only to receive, believe, and celebrate (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)! This section offers a working definition of the gospel, a framework for applying the gospel to our lives, and a survey of Sojourn's doctrinal beliefs.

The Gospel Defined¹

There are two helpful lenses through which to see the gospel: micro and macro. Much like a pair of glasses, observing truth through both lenses simultaneously will most fully and most accurately represent the gospel to us. The micro perspective orients us around the life, death, resurrection, and future return of Jesus. It emphasizes individual salvation and individual response to the work of Christ on our behalf. However, if the macro perspective is neglected, we may fail to appreciate the gospel's cosmic scope. For instance, we may tend to disregard the social applications of the gospel, including mercy, justice, and community. Let's consider these lenses in further detail.

The Micro Lens God - Man - Jesus - Response

God: God is the creator and sustainer of all creation. All creation testifies to His supremacy and glory (Psalm 19:1, Romans, 1:20). Within the account of creation in the book of Genesis, it is emphasized that God is the engineer of all creation and that humanity is created in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27). As His creation, we belong to Him. God has authority over us to define the laws of nature and morality. So what are His attributes?

God tells us that He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving, faithful, and forgiving (Exodus 34:6). But neither will He allow sin to go unpunished (Exodus 34:7). Were He to ignore wrongdoing, He would not be the perfectly just and righteous God He claims to be (Psalm 11:7, Psalm 33:5).

¹ We adapted this section from *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert.

Man: As stated above, God has created man in His image. His authoritative will is that humans should live perfectly and righteously in union with Him. Through the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, however, we learn the story of man's rejection of God's authority. At "the Fall," humanity substituted God's authority for independence and what we thought was freedom. As a result, all of humanity now lives in sin, for which the punishment is death (Romans 3:10, 3:23).

Throughout history and in every culture, we see evidence that man is still striving to restore this relationship to God. We strive in a variety of ways, and yet we all fall short. We are all dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1). This is the bad news.

Jesus: But here's the good news. God had a plan, and that plan included the sacrifice of His son on our behalf. Jesus, who was fully God and fully man (Luke 1:34-35, John 1), lived a life of perfect obedience to God. In every way, he was perfectly pleasing, faithful, and obedient to His Father (Hebrews 4:15). He truly lived the life we could never live.

But He also died the death we should have died. Jesus lived as God's perfect Son, and Jesus died as our perfect Substitute (Isaiah 53:4-6). He drank the full cup of God's wrath against us, and no condemnation remains for those who place their faith in Him (Romans 8:1). In the sacrificial death of Jesus, God exercised His mercy even as He upheld His justice. And by the resurrection of Jesus, death was defeated and the results of the Fall were unraveled, as was foretold (Genesis 3:15).

Response: When we put our faith in Jesus, we ask God to deal with us not according to our performance in life but according to Jesus' performance on our behalf. We shift our sense of worth and identity from ourselves to Him (1 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:14; Philippians 3:9). When we recognize that our sin put Jesus on the cross, we're humbled. And when we recognize that He freely and lovingly chose to die, we can happily offer our lives as worship (Romans 12:1)! We are no longer guilty before God; we have been justified (made right) with Him and we have peace with Him. Our moral failure no longer hinders our relationship with a holy God (Hebrews 10:19-22), and He no longer considers us rebels. Quite to the contrary, He considers us "dearly beloved" children (1 John 3:2). This incredible truth leads to a deep, humble gratitude and a zealous desire to flee from sin. Sin is incompatible with who we are in Christ (Romans 8:2-3).

The Macro Lens

Creation - Fall - Redemption - Consummation

Creation: God created all things, the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). All of creation was created "good" (Genesis 1), and everything worked according to God's good intentions. The world was made in order that we might know the eternal joy of life in the presence of our Maker, worshiping Him by loving Him and one another (Psalm 148, Colossians 1:16).

Fall: Because Adam, to whom God had given dominion and rule over the earth, sought his own glory and fell into sin (Genesis 1:17), all of creation is fallen, experiencing death and decay (Romans 8:20-22). Though man may desire heaven and oneness with God, he cannot attain it apart from God's intervention. The people God created perfectly and for perfection are fundamentally flawed and separated from Him (Ephesians 2:12).

Redemption: From the very beginning, Christ was always at the center of God's plan to redeem all things (1 Peter 1:20). God intends to recreate creation, to establish a new people for His own possession (Hosea 2:23). All individuals are saved through Christ (micro) into a new creation (macro). By the power of Jesus' resurrection, all of creation is reconciled to God and made new (Colossians 1:20).

Consummation: Even so, we have not yet seen the fulfillment of all of God's kingdom promises. The plan is still in motion. God's redeemed people long for the day when Christ will return for His church and claim victory once and for all. The new people and the new creation will live in harmony with one another. Sorrow and decay will be wiped away, and the dwelling place of God will be with men (Isaiah 2:4, Isaiah 11:6, Revelation 21:1-6).



Neither the micro perspective nor the macro perspective is wrong. In fact, both are right. The danger is in emphasizing one perspective over the other. The micro gospel is incomplete without the overarching narrative of God's creative and redemptive work. The macro gospel is incomplete without describing the detailed means of redemption. In order to know and share the full gospel, we must come to see each perspective without neglecting the other.

The Gospel Applied

As Christians, we are not merely a group of people with similar beliefs and religious practices. The New Testament actually claims that Christians are new people, a new humanity, created in and through the work of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3-5). We are in Him (Ephesians 1:1-14), and the beautiful effect of this new identity in Christ is clearly seen as we draw contrasts between works-based religion and the grace-based gospel.² Consider the following:

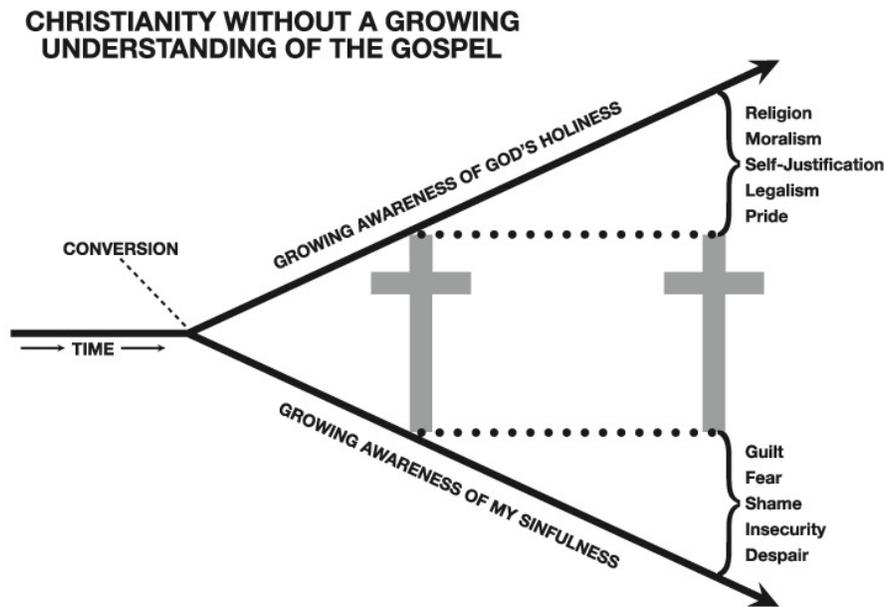
In works-based religion, we obey in order to be accepted by God, fearing what He might do if we're disobedient. The gospel motivates us toward joyful obedience because we are permanently accepted in Christ.

² We adapted this list of contrasts from *Gospel in Life* by Dr. Timothy Keller.

In works-based religion, we obey in order to get things from God, often making promises about how we will change. The gospel of grace teaches us to obey in joyful gratitude for all that has already been given.

In works-based religion, our identity is rooted in our accomplishment, hard work, or morality. This leads us to look down on others. In the gospel, God loves us despite our sin, so we can't look down on others.

Accordingly, we want to rest in, rejoice in, and live our lives out of what God has done for us in Jesus. As we grow in our understanding of the gospel, we'll be further humbled and further grateful for God's amazing mercy and grace. We'll be further humbled as we become increasingly aware of our sin. But we'll be further grateful as we become increasingly aware of the magnitude of Christ's work on our behalf. This idea is represented graphically below.³



Gospel Fluency

We never move past the gospel. We never graduate from it. The Christian life is fundamentally about learning how to live in accordance with our new identity in Christ. It's about becoming who we are, who God has already made us to be!

³ This chart has been adapted from *The Gospel-Centered Life* by Bob Thune and Will Walker.

Thus, it's our desire that Sojourn would be a "gospel fluent" community of faith. We desire to proclaim the gospel to each other through everyday conversations and scenarios because gospel truth is always relevant for everything in our lives. Belief in the gospel is not the default motivational structure of our hearts, so we need to remind each other of who Jesus is, what He has done, and who we are in Him. This can happen during church gatherings, over coffee, or while doing the dishes.

Obviously, gospel fluency is a valuable tool for missions and evangelism as well. A gospel fluent community will be able to articulate both the micro and macro perspectives, adapting our counsel and contextualizing our evangelism to any and every circumstance.

Our Doctrinal Beliefs

We believe orthodoxy (historically accepted Christian doctrine) is something that each local church should receive, without attempting to author or originate. Thus, we are confessional. This means we acknowledge certain written confessions to be good and accurate summaries of the Bible's teaching. These documents are not immune to flaw; yet we believe they contain carefully worded summaries of the Bible's content. Just as a teacher helps his/her students to look at the world and interpret what they see, confessions help us to look at the Bible and interpret what we see. It's also important to note that every church has a confession, whether formal or informal. Every church summarizes its convictions in some form or another.

At Sojourn, we fall within the broadly reformed tradition. Our Sojourn Confession of Faith (see the appendix) receives the Nicene Creed, the Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement, and the Acts 29 Doctrinal Distinctives. In addition, we embrace historic reformed confessions such as the Westminster Confession of Faith, the 1689 London Baptist Confession, and the Belgic Confession (1561) as faithful summaries of Christian teaching.

The Nicene Creed

For the purposes of our confession, Sojourn has adopted the Nicene Creed as a clear and essential statement of Christian orthodoxy. We ask that every covenant member at Sojourn come to full agreement concerning the following creed:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement

In addition to the Nicene Creed, Sojourn has adopted the Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement as a statement of our foundational doctrines (see the appendix). We ask that every member of Sojourn willingly submit to that summary of beliefs. If at any time your conscience will not permit you to submit to those doctrines, you should remove yourself from membership at Sojourn. We do not ask members to agree on every point, but we do ask that members refrain from being contentious or divisive by teaching a contrary doctrinal point of view. Disagreement is to be expected. In fact, we see disagreement as an excellent opportunity to demonstrate meaningful unity. However, any member who cannot disagree lovingly, any member who desires to spread a contrary doctrine, will be asked to remove themselves from Sojourn and find another community of faith.

Acts 29 Doctrinal Distinctives

As a member church of the Acts 29 Network, we have joined a global network of churches marked by a few theological distinctives (summarized below). Because these distinctives will inevitably influence the teaching of Sojourn's elders, those pursuing covenant membership at Sojourn should be aware of them. Total agreement is not necessary, but members should be able to submit to these distinctives with a clear conscience and without causing dissention.

We are passionate about gospel centrality.

As revealed in Scripture, the gospel is the good news of the salvation that Jesus accomplished for sinners. It's centered in Christ, it's the foundation for the life of the Church, and it's our only hope for eternal life. It's not only the means by which we're saved; it's the truth and power by

which we're sanctified. We distinguish ourselves from other religions and cults by building our church upon the historic, orthodox doctrine contained in the Nicene Creed.

Mark 1:1; Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16-18; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:2; 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 9:13; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 1:7-10; Colossians 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2 Peter 3: 11-13 Jude 3-4; Revelation 21-22

We enthusiastically embrace the sovereignty of God's grace in saving sinners.

We affirm that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not on the basis of foreseen faith but unconditionally, according to His sovereign good pleasure and will. We believe the Holy Spirit will draw the elect to faith in Jesus, graciously overcoming their resistance to the gospel. We also believe the elect will persevere and be kept secure in their salvation by grace through faith. Even so, we believe God's sovereignty in salvation neither diminishes the responsibility of people to believe in Christ nor marginalizes the necessity and power of prayer and evangelism, but rather reinforces and establishes them as the ordained means by which God accomplishes His ordained ends.

John 1:12-13; 6:37-44; 10:25-30; Acts 13:48; 16:30-31; Romans 3-4; 8:1-17,31-39; 9:1-23; 10:8-10; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 1:7,9

We recognize and rest upon the necessity of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit for all of life and ministry.

The Holy Spirit, whose primary ministry is to glorify Christ, is fully God, equal with the Father and Son. He also convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ and imparts spiritual life through new birth. The Spirit permanently indwells, graciously sanctifies, lovingly leads, and empowers all who are brought to faith in Christ. The same Spirit who indwelt and empowered Christ indwells and empowers us through spiritual gifts bestowed for the work of ministry and building up the body of Christ. These gifts are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised.

Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14; 5:17; 10:21; John 1:12-13; 3:1-15, 34; 14:12; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 2:14-21; 4:29-30; 10:38; Romans 8:9; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 12:28-31; 14:1-33; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18

We are deeply committed to the fundamental spiritual and moral equality of male and female and to men as responsible servant-leaders in the home and church.

We believe both men and women were together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, having equal access to God through faith in Christ. We believe women are to be encouraged, equipped, and empowered to utilize their gifting in service to the body and through teaching in ways

consistent with Scripture. While both husbands and wives are responsible to God for the spiritual nurture and vitality of their home, the man is primarily responsible for leading his bride in accordance with the servant leadership and sacrificial love modeled by Jesus. We also believe the elders (pastors) of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Christ and are responsible to lead the Bride of Christ. Thus, the office of elder is restricted to men.

Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7

We embrace a missionary understanding of the local church and its role as the primary means by which God chooses to establish His kingdom on earth.

The church has a clear biblical mandate to look beyond itself to the neighborhood, nation, and world. Thus, mission is more than a program or activity, it's an essential element of the church's identity. The primary way we fulfill this mission is through the planting of new churches in new neighborhoods and nations. We also believe we are responsible to neither retreat from our culture nor conform to it, but with humility, to engage it boldly as we seek its transformation and submission to Christ.

Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 10:5-25; 28:18-20; Luke 4:18-19; 24:46-47; Acts 28:31; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 3:10; 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

CHURCH

Who has God called and created us to be?

The purpose of this section is to succinctly and holistically outline the following: (1) a historical definition of the marks of a biblical church, (2) general biblical practices of the church, and (3) how the historical and general principles of the biblical church are expressed at Sojourn. Topics will include the need for both organic and organized ministry, the primary descriptor of the church as family, the reasons for 'covenant' membership, and giving. We will also give definition to some Sojourn-specific language as well as an introduction to our leadership structure.

What is the church?

While the word 'church' is familiar vocabulary for most, there can be wide-ranging differences in its definition. Sojourn affirms the three historic, Protestant and Reformed marks of a biblical church outlined in the Belgic Confession (1561): (1) the preaching of the Word, (2) the administration of the sacraments, and (3) church discipline. Article 29 of the Belgic Confession puts it this way:

The true church can be recognized if it has the following marks: The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head. By these marks one can be assured of recognizing the true church-- and no one ought to be separated from it.

We believe the church is no less than these three marks, but we also believe it's so much more. Accordingly, Sojourn seeks to practice these three marks of the church in our context, believing that as we practice them, we are aligned with Jesus, the Church Jesus instituted and the living Word by which He upholds it. For the sake of clarity, we will briefly define the three marks.

The Pure Preaching of the Gospel

The New Testament roots the Church in the revelation of the Word of God. The primary ministry of Jesus and the Apostles was characterized by a common commitment to proclaiming God's revealed truth. And the Church, God's new covenant community, is built upon and

nourished by this ministry (Ephesians 2:19-20, Acts 2:42). The greatest and most distinguishing mark of the church is the message it proclaims, the pure and unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ. All other attributes of the church, including the other two reformed marks, derive from this gospel.

The Pure Administration of the Sacraments

Edmund Clowney writes: "The Lord Jesus Christ addresses his church, not only in the language of Scripture, rich with the symbolism of revelation, but also through the sacramental signs he has appointed." A sacrament is a tangible and visible sign of a Christian person's participation in divine grace. We believe Jesus instituted two such signs during his ministry on Earth: baptism and communion.

On Baptism

Baptism is the initiating sacrament that marks belonging to the family of God. Baptism symbolizes union with Christ and consecration to Him as Lord, the forsaking of sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sojourn allows freedom to the local elders of each congregation to discern who to baptize and when. In light of the broad definition of baptism in the Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement, Sojourn churches will have the freedom to practice either paedobaptism (baptism for both professing members of the covenant community and their children) or credobaptism (baptism for professing members only).

On Communion

The Lord's Supper is visual, experiential and spiritual nourishment and sustaining grace reserved for those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and ingrafted into the family of God, the Church. God offers earthly bread and wine, a common means of sustenance, to invite us through physical representation to eat and drink of the sustaining work of Christ by faith. The mysterious nature of communion and God's presence in it goes beyond our understanding. What we eat is Christ's body, what we drink is Christ's blood, but the manner in which we partake is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit. As we partake of the bread and wine, Christ remains at the right hand of God the Father, communicating Himself to us through the sacrament. He thereby nourishes, strengthens, comforts, relieves, and renews His Church.

The Practice of Church Discipline⁴

While it's not controversial to think that a church would teach God's Word and observe the sacraments, many Christians question whether church discipline is an indispensable mark of the true church. But the very idea of church discipline is an essential parallel to the first two marks. Scripture insists that it is not enough for the Word to be properly taught, it must also be

⁴ We adapted this section from the article *Church Discipline* by Rev. Fred Greco.

obeyed and practiced (Romans 2:13, James 1:22). And in order to properly administer the sacraments, we must determine to whom the sacraments apply.

When we view the church as family, it's easy to see the purpose and blessing of church discipline. Just as loving parents must take time to correct and encourage their children, loving pastors must take time to correct and encourage the church. When we hear the word 'discipline,' we may picture trials and judgments and punishments. But the biblical word for 'discipline' is closely related to the biblical word for 'disciple,' one who is taught (Matthew 10:24), one who is learning to follow Jesus (28:19–20). Discipline is learning the ways of the Lord. This helps us to see that church discipline is necessary for our growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The Lord has given under-shepherds to His church for the purpose of building up and equipping the flock, and He uses these shepherds to discipline His people (Ephesians 4:11–16). How can we refuse instruction from our Heavenly Father?

Finally, we must never forget that church discipline is an exercise in love. It's not the "final straw." Biblical discipline is a culture of accountability, growth, forgiveness, and grace that permeates the church. It's not an alternative to litigation. It's a primer on how to lovingly engage one another, patiently exhausting lesser steps before moving to greater ones. The end sought is not simply conflict resolution but also restoration and healing, which strengthens both the individual and the body as a whole. When practiced correctly, discipline is the gospel acted out before our eyes. We must acknowledge our sin, repent, and ask for forgiveness, which is freely and fully granted. As we seek to restore those who stumble, in a spirit of loving humility, we put on display honorable conduct that points to the One who is the source of all restoration (1 Peter 2:12).

Organic & Organized

The Church is God's building, with Jesus Christ as the foundation. No one lays a foundation unless he plans to build on it (1 Corinthians 3). The Church is the Bride of Christ. She submits to Him, grows in beauty before Him, and obeys His commands (Ephesians 5). The Church is the body of Christ, with Jesus as its head. We cannot accept the Head apart from the body (Ephesians 1).

God has designed His Church as both organism and organization. It breathes, grows, matures, and lives. But it also has order (1 Corinthians 14:40), institutional norms (5:1-13), doctrinal standards (15:1-2), and defined rituals (11:23-26). A church without structure is both unbiblical and unrealistic. No one wants a church run by dictators or choked out by policies, but the Bible does not allow for a leaderless church. In the New Testament, pastors exercised authority over churches (2 Corinthians 13:1-4), pastors exhorted churches (Titus 2:15, Timothy 4:2), pastors governed churches (Acts 14:23; 15:2; 20:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17, Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 1:1; 5:1), and deacons served churches (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1).

The New Testament knows nothing of the unchurched Christian because the church lies at the center of God's purposes. Through the lives of His people, Christ is made visible to the world. Gathering for worship is an exercise in covenant renewal, a weekly celebration of the resurrection, and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet to come! So as an indispensable member of Christ's body, your full participation is required.

The biblical church contains both organic and organized components. We can observe this reality in the tension between the church as a family and the church as an institution with norms, expectations, and formal membership. Let's explore this further.

The Church as Family (Organic)

The church is a people, not a building. The Bible reveals that God has always seen fit to call a people, a people to whom He would reveal Himself and through whom He would reveal Himself to the world. In Jesus Christ, we are that people, swept up in God's grand purposes for His creation (1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 5:9-10). We are caught up in the story of God, who sent his Son into the world to redeem and reconcile us. Together we share in God's gospel blessings and commend those blessings to others, carrying our message to the very ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

But to take that one step further, theologian Sinclair Ferguson once said that the primary metaphor for the church in Scripture is family. We believe he was right. We are a family because we have been adopted by God, our Heavenly Father (Romans 8:15), and we live under our Father's rule. Astonishingly, Scripture describes us as "fellow heirs" with Jesus (Romans 8:17), and Jesus himself said that those who live in His ways and obey His Father are truly His brother and sister and mother (Matthew 12:48-50). Through Jesus' work, we believe we are children of God and brothers and sisters with each other. As family, we see it as our obligation to personally care for the needs of one another — both physically and spiritually.

Church Membership (Organized)

The New Testament uses a head and body metaphor to describe Jesus' relationship to the new covenant community:

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until 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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and

held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:11-16).

As we can see in this passage, Jesus is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18), the one responsible for the growth and maturity of His body. He holds the Church together in unity and purpose. He directs the Church and gifts its members in order that they might serve one another and fulfill His mission to make disciples (1 Corinthians 12:4-10).

In our context, the bulk of ministry work is often placed on the church staff. Picture a triangle with a few "professionals" at the top caring for the congregation below. Sojourn hopes to flip that triangle upside-down, placing church leadership underneath the congregation to support and equip each and every member for the work of ministry. We believe this is the model described in the passage above.

This type of church membership is costly. But it's what we mean when we say that God's Church is central to God's mission. We were never meant to live out our spiritual journey in isolation. Christ has designed His Body in such a way that we depend upon each other for growth, progress, and effectiveness. We are an interdependent community, and we're responsible for one another. So the modern American idea of "attending" church is totally foreign to the New Testament. We are the church, and we cannot attend ourselves (Acts 2). Again, you are an indispensable member of Christ's body, and your full participation is required.

An Example: Giving

In order to demonstrate the organic/organized tension, let's take a look at giving, which is a common source of frustration and discord within the church.

First, we need the organic aspect of the church because we need to know and be known intimately enough to be aware of needs. If we fail to relate to one another apart from Sundays, we will never cultivate the sort of relationships wherein material needs are both humbly made known and lovingly met. This goes for the internal relationships and needs within the church and the external relationships and needs in our neighborhood, both of which we have been called to meet in Jesus' name.

Equally, we need the organized aspect of the church to ensure that our giving is stewarded well. We want to set up systems and structures by which we care for the needs of the body of Christ universally (global church planting), locally (Sojourn churches), and relationally (Neighborhood Parishes). We need bookkeeping, accounting methods, and systems of accountability to ensure the utmost integrity and care, understanding that God has given us these funds to be leveraged for His glory. We see examples and exhortations to this kind of organization all throughout Scripture (Proverbs 13:4, Luke 14:28-30, Acts 20:28-35, 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).

Putting Principle into Practice

Sojourn has a particular and contextualized way of expressing our beliefs and convictions regarding the local church. We believe it's both faithful to the Scriptures and appropriate for our cultural context. What follows is a brief outline our structure, the trellis (organized) upon which the vine can grow (organic). We readily admit that we are imperfect, and the following outline is by no means the only way to organize the church. However, we are deeply committed to the structure we've set forth, believing God has given it to us to steward well so long as He would have us to continue.

Our Structure

Neighborhood Parishes

A Neighborhood Parish is a smaller expression of the church made up of ordinary people learning to follow Jesus and live on mission together in the context of everyday life. We seek to live together with gospel intentionality for the glory of God and the good of the neighborhood. Sojourn's members often testify to the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work through the joys and frustrations of living in steady-state Christian community. And it's through these smaller expressions of the church that our neighbors get to see the gospel's implications lived out. Alongside our Sunday Gatherings, the Neighborhood Parish functions as the central disciple making rhythm at Sojourn.

Sunday Gatherings

On Sundays, all of our Neighborhood Parishes come together to worship Jesus and proclaim the gospel through song, scripture, and sacrament. Corporate worship is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that awaits us in eternity and is a powerful display of God's glory to our city. Although the bulk of practical ministry will take place in and through our Neighborhood Parishes, Sojourn's Sunday Gatherings are an indispensable component to the theological growth and unity of our members. The Sunday Gathering is where we rehearse the gospel story we're living daily.

Neighborhood Churches

Within this model, church planting is really about parish multiplying. As more and more parishes are multiplied throughout the city of Houston, we hope to see new local churches forming new Sunday Gatherings in new neighborhoods! We'll discuss this further in the 'Mission' portion, but we see this as a viral, cost-effective, sustainable, and indigenous method for making new disciples throughout our city.

Our Leadership

Church leadership is a key issue because our culture has an aversion to words like submission, authority, and discipline. Many people no longer value or trust spiritual authority, but we cannot

ignore scriptural mandate simply because authority has been abused. The local church is still called to organize under biblically qualified leadership.

Biblically qualified leaders limit disunity, disorientation, and disobedience in the Body of Christ by providing oversight, insight, and foresight to those entrusted to their care. In an effort to align ourselves with scripture, we ask that every member of Sojourn submit to the following summary of beliefs:

- Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He is the Apostle who plants the church, the Leader who builds the church, the Senior Pastor who instructs the church, and the Chief Shepherd who rules the church (Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:15-20).
- Serving under the authority of Jesus are elders, deacons, and church members.
- Elders are qualified male leaders who oversee the church through leadership, teaching, and shepherding (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- Deacons are qualified male and female leaders who assist the elders by serving various needs in the church (Romans 16:1, Philipians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- Members are disciples of Jesus who are committed to praying for the church, serving the church according to their various gifts, giving to the church of their time and resources, caring for the church as the priesthood of believers, belonging to the church as the covenant community of Christ, and living as a community of missionaries sent by God.

Our Elders

We believe a plurality of men should be in place to oversee the doctrine, discipline, and direction of the church. This helps prevent the church from falling into error or making poor decisions. Sojourn's Council of Elders is comprised of qualified men who meet and maintain the standards expressed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These men may be vocational or non-vocational elders whose main responsibility is to shepherd the flock of God with wisdom and integrity (1 Peter 5).

Our Deacons

Sojourn's team of deacons is comprised of qualified men and women who meet and maintain the standards expressed in 1 Timothy 3. These men and women may be vocational or non-vocational deacons whose main responsibility is to serve the church and support the elders to do the work of leading, preaching, teaching, and prayer (Acts 6:1-6). Sojourn's team of deacons includes those serving in the following roles:

- Neighborhood Parish Leaders: Lead servants responsible for fostering gospel family with their respective Neighborhood Parishes.
- Sunday Ministry Team Leaders: Lead servants responsible for fostering a welcoming and hospitable environment for Sojourn's guests.

Our Staff

In theory, Sojourn's flat and simple structure reduces the need for large amounts of paid staff labor to oversee various programs. That said, we're committed to faithful and winsome teaching, quality music, effective leadership development, clear communication, and precise administration. If at any time you need to contact a staff member, you're welcome to do so via The City. Alternatively, you may submit a question through our website.

Our Covenant Members

Membership at Sojourn is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. To the extent that we're united to Christ, we're united to one another. We covenant together, therefore, as a community of faith on a common mission. We covenant as brothers and sisters to mutually care for one another and to saturate our neighborhood with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors. We covenant with one another to edify one another in the gospel, to grow in knowing one another more deeply, to speak hard things graciously, to identify and grow in our respective roles and giftings, to extend grace and understanding to one another when in tension, and to seek reconciliation when we find ourselves in conflict.

A covenant is a written agreement or promise between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action. Within Scripture, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), while others are solely between men (1 Samuel 18; 2 Samuel 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God's covenant with the Church is an example of the former, Sojourn's membership covenant represents the latter. A covenant between the local church and a Christian involves affirmation, oversight, and submission. The church covenants to affirm and oversee the member (1 Peter 5:2-12); the member covenants to submit to the church (Hebrews 13:17).

Practically, covenanting with a local church avails us to the diverse gifts, talents, strengths, and prayers it provides. Submitting to a local church identifies us with the Body of Christ and provides a community wherein we can obey God's communal commands. It keeps us accountable, makes us responsible for other believers, and protects us from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Spiritual growth is a community project. So when membership is ambiguous, a church will struggle to offer the benefits listed above.

Sojourn doesn't expect anything more from its members than what's called for in the Bible. Generally, members are expected to pray for the church, serve the church according to their gifts and abilities (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30), give to the church according to their time and resources (2 Corinthians 8:1-15), care for the church as the priesthood of believers (Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 3:12-17), belong to the church as the family of Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22), be equipped for ministry in the church as disciples of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:6-16), and live as missionaries sent by God to renew peoples and cultures through

the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21). For more on this, please see the Membership Covenant at the very end of the appendix.

Giving to the Church

We fully understand that giving is a topic within the church that many find uncomfortable, even manipulative. Nonetheless, we wish to humbly submit a full explanation of our beliefs and expectations regarding this subject. The following was adapted from a series of blog posts. You can find the original posts in their entirety on the Sojourn Houston Blog.

Why Should We Give?

In Christ, the extravagant generosity of our Heavenly Father is made obvious (Ephesians 1:3). In Christ, every Christian who ever lived was given infinitely more than he/she deserved (Romans 6:23). In Christ, our lives and lifestyles now have eternal significance (Psalm 90:17). And in Christ, our duty to give becomes an incredible privilege (2 Corinthians 8:1-4).

Every spending decision has spiritual ramifications. Every dollar—whether spent, saved, or given—accomplishes something, and this reality requires that we slow down, examine our hearts, and repent if necessary. Spending, saving, and giving can each be a spiritual act of worship, but even when the line seems blurry, this we can know: We are never more like Jesus than when we lay down our own self-interest for the sake of God's mission.

Jesus wants us to live with complete and total security, so He won't allow us to find security in things that simply aren't secure (Matthew 6:19). Because our most valuable possession is already secure in Christ, giving is the safest investment we can make (Matthew 6:20). Therefore, at Sojourn, we're unashamed about asking for your money. But let's be clear: Our primary goal is not that we'd be a well-funded church; our primary goal is that we'd be a worshiping church! We want your money because God wants your heart! Although we may tend to view giving as a chore, we're actually being given an opportunity to image the generosity of Christ and be "rich toward God" (Luke 12:20-21). It's a chance to trust. And it's a chance to grow.

God has never needed our money (Psalm 50:10-12). But He loves us and graciously invites us to take part in what He's doing! So in light of such a gracious offer, our bank statements have as much to say about our spiritual condition as the vitality of our prayers or the underlining in our bibles. It's true that our use of money is a spiritual discipline. Too often, though, we view giving as an act of self-denial; we're primarily concerned with what we're sacrificing as individuals. But what if we began to see our giving in light of what's gained? What if our personal abstinence were secondary to the priority of loving both God and neighbor with our finances?

Where Should We Give?

When we submit ourselves to the authority of Christ as exercised through the local church, we join God's Plan A for redemption. In a deeper sense than we could fully grasp, the church is family (Mark 3:34-35). We eat together, play together, cry together, and laugh together. We share our time, our lives, our homes, our work, our struggles, and our decisions. Day after day, we provide for one another. So wouldn't it make sense to give to that family? To give where we're most invested? To give where we receive the most spiritual benefit?

When you give to the local church, you sow into the only institution established by Jesus to equip you and your entire spiritual family for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16). If we provide for our earthly families, how much more should we provide for our heavenly family?

Some people have very good reasons to doubt whether the church and its leaders should be trusted. That's understandable. Sojourn makes every effort to maintain financial transparency, but even so, let's look to Scripture for guidance here. In Matthew 12:41-44, a poor widow elicits Jesus' commendation for contributing "two small copper coins, which make a penny." It was "all she had to live on." But because she gave sacrificially, Jesus considered her contribution more significant than even the largest sum. But here's the thing: In her act of giving, she was willing to look beyond a corrupt temple system! And so was Jesus! He knew better than anyone the depth of corruption, and yet he commended the widow because she gave unto the Lord.

How Much Should We Give?

With 80% of the world's evangelical wealth in North America, 10% of our collective income represents about \$260 billion. But despite our extraordinary wealth, giving among Protestants averages less than 3% per household income. That's significantly less than American evangelicals were giving during the Great Depression!

So how much should we give? We could make a case for 10% (Lev. 27:30-33). We could make a case for 23% (Deut. 12:6-7; Deut. 14:28-29). We could make a case for 50% (Luke 19:8; Luke 3:11). And we could even make a case for 100% (Mark 10:21). But to do so would miss the point. God wants the entirety of our lives, which is almost always more than we're ready and willing to give.

Under the Law, God disciplined His people according to timeless, God-honoring principles in preparation for their freedom in Christ. Astoundingly, we're now characterized by the indwelling of God Himself (Gal. 4:6)! So for God's people to be less generous under grace is a disgrace. With our great and glorious and costly freedom comes a great and glorious and costly responsibility. So as we say every Sunday, the faithful follower of Christ should give regularly (1 Cor. 16:2), sacrificially (2 Cor. 8:2-3), and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7).

God works mightily through a people who are willing to give, willing to serve, and willing to die. But when we rob God, we rob ourselves (Malachi 3:8). Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need (Malachi 3:10). Trust Him! Put Him to the test, and watch as He works mightily!

MISSION

What has God saved and sent us to do?

From Genesis to Revelation, the mission of God never changes: to redeem a people who would glorify the Father by exalting the Son in the power of the Spirit. This is the mission of God, and the mission of God is the mission of the Church. From Houston to Dubai, the mission of the Church is the same. This conviction ultimately gave birth to Sojourn's mission statement: Joining the Father, Son, and Spirit in the historic work of redemption...

But while the mission of the Church never changes, her ecclesiological forms are contextually derived and adaptable. From the American megachurch movement of the 1990's to the present day house church movement in China, the Church's mission remains constant even as its forms are flexible. At Sojourn, we are striving to remain faithful to the mission of the global church while positioning ourselves to reach the city we call "home."

The City of Houston

Greater Houston is home to nearly 6.5 million people. We're an increasingly thriving, influential, and diverse global city. It has been predicted that Houston could pass up Chicago as the nation's 3rd largest city by the year 2020 and could possibly surpass Los Angeles by 2050. Houston has a confluence of scale, population growth, youth, and global reach. Its land area is nearly equal to the state of Massachusetts, and it's adding around 1.3 million residents per decade, which means the population is growing by far more than one megachurch (2000+) worth of new residents each week. So even if Houston's churches hold their ground, we're still losing ground.

Because Houston is a nationwide jobs leader and home to 24 Fortune 500 companies, young people are moving here from around the world. In fact, the average age in Houston is 32 compared to the U.S. average of 37. And Houston recently overtook New York City as the most ethnically diverse city in the United States. Over 90 languages are spoken here amongst 1,000,000+ foreign born residents.

But Houston is also the most notorious human trafficking jurisdiction in the United States. In the shadows of global commerce, a quarter of the urban population lives below the poverty line. And Houston's children are simply underprepared to succeed in the modern economy. But the city's challenges are the church's opportunities. Christians share a rich heritage of selfless service, ingenuity, and societal reform. The gospel of Jesus Christ declares our glorious dual

citizenship, so we have the spiritual freedom to be the best kind of neighbors here and now. We can lead the charge in the fight against human trafficking. We can build bridges across the growing income gap. We can lead the way in building thorough and sustainable systems of education. And we can lay a beautiful foundation for life in a multi-ethnic society.

Houston is truly a global city, full of opportunity. But Houston is not only a key regional city; it's a gateway to the nations, which makes this a strategic city for the spread of the gospel into unreached people groups. A spiritual revival in Houston would inevitably send foreign-born missionaries back home with the gospel of Jesus. So it would be our honor and joy to take part in seeing this city saturated with thriving and multiplying churches such that the presence of the living Christ cannot be ignored!

A Family of Neighborhood Churches

Theological Foundation

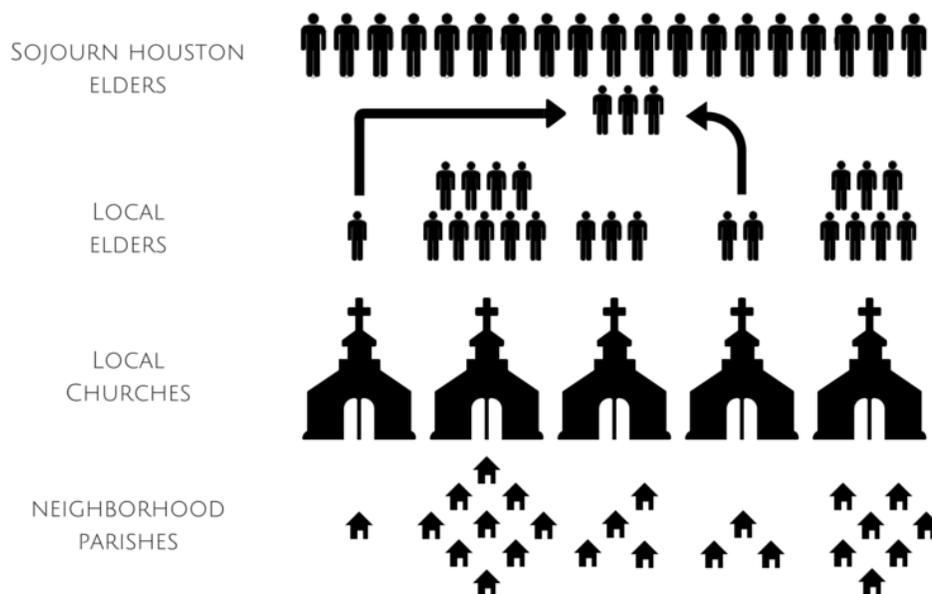
Sojourn's ecclesiology (the nature and structure of the church) is rooted in the Trinitarian Godhead. Just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons yet one God, so we are distinct churches yet one church. Just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are non-autonomous with respect to one another, so we are non-autonomous churches with respect to one another. God does not value autonomy, so we do not value autonomy. Rather, we want to structure Sojourn Houston as a family of neighborhood churches, distinct yet united, particular yet one. We believe churches in community most faithfully represent God to our city and ultimately, we believe we can do more together than apart.

- **Sojourn Houston:** A family of neighborhood churches joining God in the redemption of Houston, one neighborhood at a time.
- **Sojourn [Our Neighborhood] Church:** A neighborhood church joining God in the redemption of [Our Neighborhood].

Our Structure

Our desire is to faithfully root the structure of Sojourn Houston within our theological foundation, while strategically positioning ourselves to reach our context. We believe this is best accomplished as we pursue a family of neighborhood churches who combine the best of traditional church planting and the best of multisite. With respect to traditional church planting, we want to preserve localized eldership and shepherding, organizational adaptability, and a lean missiology. With respect to the multisite model, we want to preserve interchurch unity, community, oversight, and efficiency. Each Sojourn church appoints local elders to give oversight and pastoral care to the local church, but these elders also serve the greater body of elders to give oversight to Sojourn Houston at large.

When a new Sojourn church is planted in a new neighborhood, the church planter will typically begin as a lone elder under the oversight of Sojourn Houston's larger body of elders. In fact, churches with fewer than three local elders (one of which must be non-staff) shall be considered under the authority of the larger body of elders (represented graphically by the two arrows below). This is designed to protect each church and the overall mission, providing high accountability and low control. As a separate entity, Sojourn Houston will also provide strategic central staff positions for the purpose of serving the churches collectively.



Our Shared Values

Strategic Church Planting

Throughout the New Testament, we see the people of God interpreting the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) as a call to plant churches. And we believe planting churches is still the most effective and sustainable way to make and teach and grow disciples. Our hope is to join in God's historic, redemptive movement to see the gospel of Jesus made non-ignorable in Houston by saturating the landscape of our city with neighborhood parishes and gospel-centered churches. In addition, each Sojourn Houston church is engaged in mutual partnerships with churches internationally. Through these partnerships, we hope to mobilize men and women to engage in long-term church planting ministry overseas.

In order to pursue church planting, we have strategic partnerships with:

- the Acts 29 Network (acts29network.org),
- Redeemer City to City (redeemercitytocity.com), and
- the Houston Church Planting Network (hcpn.org).

Justice & Mercy

Our God is a just and merciful God, and we get the joy of manifesting His character for the sake of those in need. The gospel of Jesus Christ reveals that God has acted graciously, generously, and sacrificially on behalf of His people, the spiritually poor and helpless. Therefore, Sojourn churches are passionate about connecting church volunteers and resources with organizations serving the poor and marginalized. Our goal is not to reinvent the wheel; we desire to partner with and strengthen existing affiliate organizations. To this end, we maintain a growing list of local and global partnerships with organizations we know, trust, and love.

Redeemed Family

Scripture describes the Church as the household of God (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19). We are His children, His family. So it's our joy and honor to demonstrate redeemed family to a world of broken families. We believe healthy spiritual and biological families are the bedrock of a healthy society. Thus, we intend to provide Sojourn churches with premarital, marital, and family counseling; foster and adoption support and services; and well-trained, well-resourced neighborhood parishes, which function as the spiritual families within which biological families grow and thrive.

In order to pursue redeemed family, we provide our Neighborhood Parishes, premarital counseling, general counseling, biannual forums, equipping classes, and foster/adoption guidance and communal support.

Integration of Faith & Work

Houston's economy and diversity make it a modern-day crossroads. Houston is home to the nations, which means Houston is a gateway to the nations. The global economy, within which Houston is a hub, provides an effective means through which the gospel message can spread. This requires a reorientation of discipleship for life in the workplace. We believe God's gospel purposes can be brought to bear on every aspect of our existence, especially our work. Thus, we hope to equip the Church to work faithfully within all professional and industry spheres.

In order to pursue integration of faith and work, we are in the early stages of developing a discipleship program designed to expand our Christian influence from life at home and within the church, to life in the workplace as well.

Artistic Expression

God did not create in black and white; He used a beautiful array of color. And for Christians, the resurrection of Jesus validated the importance of the material world. In the new heavens and new earth, the creative nature of God will find its full expression. In accordance with these theological realities, Christian history has an impressive tradition of seeing the imagination redeemed as men and women reflect God's creativity through the arts. We want to see the Church reach into and redeem the arts in Houston as a tangible foreshadow of the creative beauty of the new heavens and new earth. We want for our spaces to be used to advance and

support the arts, for the good and beauty of our neighborhoods and the continued progress of Houston's diverse culture.

In order to support and further the arts in our city, Sojourn Houston has established the Aurora Residency, a fully-funded residency for artists (auroraresidency.com).

Conclusion

Sojourn's ultimate aim is to see generations and generations of faithfulness as we join God in what He is doing. He was already at work in Houston before us. He's at work in Houston today. And He'll be at work in Houston long after we are gone. We simply want to be a part of what God is doing.

Next Steps

The Membership Covenant

In order to ensure that all aspiring members understand Sojourn's membership theology and practice, this covenant also serves as a teaching document. Please read it carefully and consider it prayerfully. The covenant can be found at the very end of the appendix.

We also ask that you schedule a meeting with your current parish leaders in order to discuss the content of the covenant. Feel free to ask your questions and share your concerns. Because we value gospel family and see the Neighborhood Parish as the primary means through which our members receive care and shepherding, your membership covenant requires the signature(s) of one/both of your parish leaders.

Baptism

In addition to life within a Neighborhood Parish, the sacrament of water baptism is required of each covenant member. In accordance with Scripture, baptism is the sign and seal of a Christian's entrance into the new covenant community, the Church. In most cases, Sojourn will recognize previous baptisms, including infant baptisms. However, re-baptism is permitted—and may even be encouraged—under certain circumstances. If you have not yet been baptized, or if you have any questions regarding your baptism status as an aspiring member of Sojourn, please contact one of our pastors.

Sunday Ministry Teams

Our Sunday Ministry Teams are always looking for more volunteers, and we look first to our covenant members. In order to provide a warm and welcoming environment for our family and its guests to hear and respond to the gospel every Sunday morning, we depend heavily upon the faithful service of our covenant members. Though Jesus had all authority and a universe to hold together, our King came as a Servant, so please consider following in His footsteps! If you're interested in serving and/or getting more information on the Ministry Teams we have available, please send a City message to a staff member.

Online Giving

At this point, there's no need to revisit Sojourn's outlook on giving to the local church. However, for practical purposes, we do encourage our covenant members to set up recurring donations through our online giving platform. There are several reasons why you may find this method of giving preferable, but from our perspective, recurring donations aid our Financial Stewardship Team in planning for the future. When our church can depend upon a steady stream of support, we will collectively grow in stability, freedom, and generosity. To access our online giving platform, please visit the 'Give' tab on our website. Thanks!

Our Next Members' Meeting

We typically schedule our quarterly members' meetings a few weeks after the membership class. We do this in order to give you 2-3 weeks to pray through the covenant and meet with your parish leaders. If during that period you decide to sign your covenant, we welcome you to join the family at our next members' meeting! The next meeting is scheduled for:

You can submit your signed covenant then and there. If you're not ready to sign in time for the members' meeting, please know that we wouldn't want for you to rush this decision. Take your time, and submit your covenant when you're ready.

Appendix

The Sojourn Confession of Faith

The Sojourn Confession of Faith is a composition of doctrines that frame our theological identity; they're foundational to the unity and mission of our churches. This should not be read as an exhaustive commentary on the Christian faith, but it will guide the instruction, teaching, and preaching of elders throughout the Sojourn Collective.

Sojourn churches may be denominationally affiliated, but the Sojourn Collective itself is a non-denominational entity. However, we by no means value autonomy or novelty. We wish to be rooted in historic, orthodox Christianity and a broadly Reformed theological tradition. In addition to this confession, therefore, we recognize both the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* as faithful summaries of Christian doctrine.

Doctrines essential to saving faith must be stood upon and defended, so we ask that every Covenant Member come together in total agreement with the historic Nicene Creed (325 AD):

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Sojourn recognizes additional doctrines which, although not essential for salvation, further establish our theological identity. We do not require that all Covenant Members agree concerning *The Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement* and *Acts 29 Doctrinal Distinctives* as stated below. We do, however, ask that every Covenant Member willingly submit to these doctrines as truths which form the bedrock upon which our churches are built and sustained:

The Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement

THE TRI-UNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

REVELATION

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

CREATION OF HUMANITY

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not

simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles, which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

THE FALL

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan’s temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God’s own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

THE PLAN OF GOD

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is that Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

THE JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the other person, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and

in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

GOD'S NEW PEOPLE

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

The Acts 29 Network Doctrinal Distinctives

Acts 29 is a network of church-planting churches that stands in the tradition of historic evangelical confessionalism. While we believe it is vital that the Elders of each of our local churches determine where they stand on doctrines of second importance, we do wish to make known our convictions on the following five distinctive theological foundations.

WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT GOSPEL CENTRALITY.

We believe the gospel is the good news of what God has graciously accomplished for sinners through the sinless life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, namely our forgiveness from sin and complete justification before God; this gospel is also the foundation for our confidence in the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom, and the consummation of his purpose for all creation in the new heavens and new earth.

This gospel is centered in Christ, is the foundation for the life of the Church, and is our only hope for eternal life; this gospel is not proclaimed if Christ's penal substitutionary death and bodily resurrection are not central to our message.

This Gospel is not only the means by which people are saved, but also the truth and power by which people are sanctified; it is the truth of the Gospel that enables us to genuinely and joyfully do what is pleasing to God and to grow in progressive conformity to the image of Christ.

The salvation offered in this gospel message is received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; no ordinance, ritual, work, or any other activity on the part of man is required in order to be saved.

(Mark 1:1; Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16-18; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:2; 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 9:13; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 1: 7-10; Colossians 1: 19-20; 2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2 Peter 3: 11-13 Jude 3-4; Revelation 21-22)

WE ENTHUSIASTICALLY EMBRACE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD'S GRACE IN SAVING SINNERS.

We affirm that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not on the basis of foreseen faith but unconditionally, according to his sovereign good pleasure and will.

We believe that through the work of the Holy Spirit, God will draw the elect to faith in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously and effectually overcoming their stubborn resistance to the gospel so that they will most assuredly and willingly believe.

We also believe that these, the elect of God whom he gave to the Son, will persevere in belief and godly behavior and be kept secure in their salvation by grace through faith.

We believe that God's sovereignty in this salvation neither diminishes the responsibility of people to believe in Christ nor marginalizes the necessity and power of prayer and evangelism, but rather reinforces and establishes them as the ordained means by which God accomplishes his ordained ends.

(John 1:12-13; 6:37-44; 10:25-30; Acts 13:48; 16:30-31; Romans 3-4; 8:1-17,31-39; 9:1-23; 10:8-10; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 1:7,9)

WE RECOGNIZE AND REST UPON THE NECESSITY OF THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR ALL OF LIFE AND MINISTRY.

The Holy Spirit is fully God, equal with the Father and Son, whose primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; he also convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ and imparts spiritual life through regeneration (the new birth).

The Spirit permanently indwells, graciously sanctifies, lovingly leads, and empowers all who are brought to faith in Christ so that they might live in obedience to the inerrant Scriptures.

The model for our reliance upon the Spirit and our experience of his indwelling and empowering presence is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who was filled with the Spirit and entirely dependent upon his power for the performance of miracles, the preaching of the kingdom of God, and all other dimensions of his earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit who indwelt and empowered Christ in like manner indwells and empowers us through spiritual gifts he has bestowed for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ. Although there are different understandings in our network of the nature and function of these gifts, we all recognize that they are divine provisions central to spiritual growth and effective ministry and are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines.

(Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14; 5:17; 10:21; John 1:12-13; 3:1-15, 34; 14:12; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 2:14-21; 4:29-30; 10:38; Romans 8:9; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 12:28-31; 14:1-33; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18)

WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUAL AND MORAL EQUALITY OF MALE AND FEMALE AND TO MEN AS RESPONSIBLE SERVANT-LEADERS IN THE HOME AND CHURCH.

Both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ. Men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. Therefore, women are to be encouraged, equipped, and empowered to utilise their gifting in ministry, in service to the body of Christ, and through teaching in ways that are consistent with the Word of God.

Both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality in the home, but God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant-leadership and sacrificial love characterised by Jesus Christ. This principle of male headship should not be confused with, nor give any hint of, domineering control. Rather, it is to be the loving, tender and nurturing care of a godly man who is himself under the kind and gentle authority of Jesus Christ.

The Elders/Pastors of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight and to teach/preach the Word of God in corporate assembly for the building up of the body. The office of Elder/Pastor is restricted to men.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

ACTS 29 EMBRACES A MISSIONARY UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND ITS ROLE AS THE PRIMARY MEANS BY WHICH GOD CHOOSES TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH.

The church has a clear biblical mandate to look beyond its own community to the neighborhood, the nation, and the world as a whole; thus mission is not an optional program in the church but an essential element in the identity of the church.

We are called to make Christ known through the gospel and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring his lordship to bear on every dimension of life.

The primary way we fulfill this mission is through the planting of churches that plant churches and the training of their leaders. Our aim is that Jesus Christ would be more fully formed in each person through the ministry of those churches God enables us to plant around the world.

We also believe we are responsible neither to retreat from our culture nor to conform to it, but with humility, through the Spirit and the truth of the gospel, to engage it boldly as we seek its transformation and submission to the lordship of Christ.

(Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 10:5-25; 28:18-20; Luke 4:18-19; 24:46-47; Acts 28:31; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 3:10; 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10)

Our Bylaws

Article 1 – Name & Organization

1.1 The name of this church shall be Sojourn Heights Church (“Sojourn”). Sojourn shall be governed by these Bylaws and will operate as a non-profit corporation of the State of Texas.

1.2 Sojourn maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of denominational control, but shall retain the right and ability to affiliate with various networks for support, collaboration, and accountability. In terms of theological and ecclesiastical leadership, Sojourn acknowledges and defers to the leadership and oversight of the Sojourn Collective to the extent delineated within the Sojourn Collective Bylaws, provided, however, that no direction given by the Sojourn Collective shall be followed that violates any provision of these Bylaws.

1.3 No part of Sojourn’s net income shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, officers, or other private persons. Sojourn, however, shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the permissible purposes described in Section 2.2.

1.4 No substantial part of Sojourn’s activities may include the carrying on of political propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. Sojourn may not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office. Sojourn may not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on (1) by an entity exempt from federal income tax under Code Section 501(c)(3) or (2) by an entity, to which contributions are deductible under Code Section 170(c)(2).

Article 2 – Purpose

2.1 This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. To this end, we equip the saints through the faithful preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God given in Scripture. We nurture Christian individuals and families in order that they might enjoy the benefits of the covenant of grace; encourage, support, and participate in local, domestic, and international church planting; administer the sacraments of baptism and communion; encourage Biblical community among believers; serve individuals, families, and churches through the provision of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs; and call fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement regarding the nature of the local church.

2.2 Subject to the provisions of the Texas Business Organizations Code (“TBOC”), Sojourn is organized and must be operated exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, or literary purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as

amended (the "Code"), or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law.

Article 3 – Beliefs

3.1 Sojourn's Confession of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For legal purposes, the Council of Elders is Sojourn's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application with respect to faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline.

Sojourn also delineates the following beliefs:

3.2 We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139.)

3.3 We believe God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). We believe God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4). We believe any form of sexual immorality (including lust, adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10). We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Sojourn as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to Sojourn's members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Sojourn in any capacity, agree to and abide by this statement (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22). We believe God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of this church.

3.4 Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, Sojourn will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, Sojourn's elders and staff shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Sojourn shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

Article 4 – Government

4.1 The whole of this church's government shall rest under the royal authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22), whose decree concerning the church is revealed in Scripture. Serving under this authority and pursuant to Section 4.2, Sojourn's senior leadership shall be vested in a governing board of male elders/pastors (each, an "Elder" and collectively, "the Council of Elders") made up of both paid and unpaid men who meet the qualifications of Eldership as outlined in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), as determined by the current Council of Elders. If no Council of Elders has yet been established pursuant to Section 4.3, the Sojourn Collective governing body shall oversee the appointment of qualified Elders. In addition, deacons are both paid and unpaid lead servants under the authority of the Council of Elders. Deacons may be male or female, and must meet the biblical qualifications of a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Members who hold these offices shall be considered ordained officers of the church by the authority vested in the Council of Elders. Elders are ordained with the authority to oversee the church. Deacons are ordained with the authority to serve the church.

4.2 Notwithstanding Section 4.1, for the purposes of TBOC and the Texas Nonprofit Corporation Act (or any equivalent thereof), the "Board of Directors" shall be synonymous with the "Council of Elders" and a "Director" shall be synonymous with an "Elder." The Council of Elders shall have the power to control and manage the affairs and property of Sojourn in accordance with the purposes and limitations set forth in the TBOC, the Certificate of Formation of Sojourn, and these Bylaws, as they may be amended.

4.3 The Council of Elders shall consist of no less than three (3) members. Each elder must be at least 18 years of age. Elders need not be residents of the State of Texas. Elders shall serve terms of three (3) years and may be elected to any number of consecutive terms. Candidates for eldership must be members in good standing and nominated by a 3/4 majority vote of the current Council of Elders. The installation process for new elders shall include: (1) a period of training and testing to assess the candidate's character and enhance the candidate's competencies, (2) a period of no less than four (4) weeks during which church members may present concerns or objections to the Council of Elders for consideration, (3) a unanimous vote of the Council of Elders, and (4) installation by the laying on of hands. Upon the renewal of an Elder's term on the Council of Elders, a 3/4 majority vote of the remaining members at a meeting of the Council of Elders will effectuate the reelection. The number of Elders and the terms thereof may be increased or decreased from time to time by amendment to these Bylaws. However, no decrease may have the effect of shortening the term of any then-serving Elder, and the number of Elders may not be decreased below three (3). Serving on the Council of Elders does not result in contract rights as an employee.

4.4 All Sojourn employees are "at will," and the employment relationship may be terminated without regard to a person's eldership status.

4.5 Seasons of sabbath are required for all Elders. Lay Elders shall take a minimum of one (1) year sabbatical for every seven (7) years served. Vocational Elders shall take one to two (1-2) months sabbatical within their first five (5) years, and every three (3) years thereafter. Elders on sabbatical shall be considered inactive and nonvoting. The Council of Elders may also agree by majority vote to transition a fellow Elder to an inactive and nonvoting status as necessary and without regard to sabbatical. Should an Elder intend to resign, he must make his intentions known in the form of a written letter addressed to the Council of Elders. Any Elder may resign from office at any time. Any such resignation must be in writing and specify the time that it will take effect. The Council of Elders need not accept the resignation for it to be effective. If the Council of Elders accepts the resignation of an Elder tendered to take effect at a future time other than the time at which such Elder's term would otherwise expire, a successor Elder may be selected in accordance with Section 4.3, to take office when the resignation becomes effective. An Elder appointed to fill a vacancy that exists for any reason other than the end of the predecessor's term of office serves for the unexpired term of the predecessor. No resignation may discharge any accrued obligation of an Elder.

4.6 Any credible charge against an Elder of moral impropriety, doctrinal error, or anything else contrary to the biblical qualifications of an Elder (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), shall be investigated by the Council of Elders. During the investigation, the Elder in question shall be deemed inactive and nonvoting. If the Council of Elders find tenable evidence of wrongdoing, they shall charge the Elder in accordance with Scripture James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19–21). A 3/4 majority vote of the remaining Elders is necessary to find an Elder guilty of the charges. The disciplinary consequences for such a finding shall be determined by another 3/4 majority vote of the remaining Elders. In such instance, the members of Sojourn shall be notified in writing of the process and results.

4.7 The Council of Elders may organize however they deem necessary so long as it preserves the essential biblical elements and functionality of a plurality of Elders. The Council of Elders may appoint various councils and committees from within its membership and the membership of the church at large. These councils and committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and powers specifically delegated and shall only exist for the period specified by the Council of Elders.

4.8 No loan shall be made from the church to any Elder. Any director who assents to the making of such a loan shall be jointly and severally liable for its repayment.

4.9 Deacons are lead servants in the ministry of the church. They work with their fellow deacons to extend the overseeing ministry of the Council of Elders into the fiscal, property, and physical needs of the church. Under the leadership of the Council of Elders, they care for and maintain the orderly administration of our fellowship, giving expression to the communion of saints. The office of Deacon shall not be authorized ecclesiastical jurisdiction with respect to church doctrine or church discipline.

4.10 Any Elder or Deacon may nominate a Deacon candidate to the Council of Elders, and Deacons will be selected by a 3/4 majority vote of the Elders. Upon selection, Deacons serve indefinitely. Deacons may take sabbaticals from service whenever deemed necessary by the Council of Elders. Deacons who wish to resign must do so in written form addressed to the Council of Elders. Involuntary termination of service requires a 3/4 majority vote of the Council of Elders.

4.11 The principal office of Sojourn is located at 608 Aurora Street, Houston, Texas, 77008. Sojourn may also have offices at any other location that the Council of Elders may, from time to time, determine or as the business of Sojourn may require. Meetings of the Council of Elders may be held either within or without the State of Texas. An annual meeting of the Council of Elders must be held at a time and place fixed by the Council of Elders; notice of this time and place must be given to each Elder at least five (5) days before the date thereof.

4.12 The books of accounts of the activities and transactions of Sojourn, including a minute book of the formal meetings of the Council of Elders, must be kept at the Sojourn offices. The minute book shall contain a copy of the Certificate of Formation, a copy of these Bylaws, and all minutes of the meetings of the Council of Elders. Sojourn must keep financial books, records, and annual reports in accordance with Section 22.352 of the TBOC, as may be amended from time to time. Sojourn must also keep, at the registered or principal office of Sojourn, a record giving the names and addresses of the Elders entitled to vote. Any Elder, or such Elder's agent, accountant, or attorney, may inspect the books and records of Sojourn for any proper purpose under law at any reasonable time, with prior notice to the remainder of the Council of Elders.

4.13 Unless a greater proportion is required by the TBOC, a majority of the entire Council of Elders constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business or of any specified item of business. Except as otherwise provided by the TBOC or these Bylaws, the vote of a majority of the Elders present in person or by proxy at any meeting at which a quorum is present will be considered the act of the Council of Elders.

Article 5 – Covenant Membership

5.1 The membership of Sojourn shall be composed of individuals who affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ and submit willingly to the tenets of Sojourn's Confession of Faith, attached hereto as Exhibit A [not applicable within this appendix], and who offer evidence, by their confession and conduct, that they are living in accord with their affirmations. The Council of Elders shall have final authority in all matters of church governance, as set forth and described in the Bylaws.

5.2 The expectations of a member of Sojourn shall be outlined in the Membership Covenant and agreed to by signature.

5.3 Members shall be removed from the roll for the following reasons: (1) death, (2) transfer of membership to another church, (3) withdrawal of membership by a written letter of intent addressed to the Council of Elders, or (4) dismissal by church discipline as outlined in Article 6. Dismissed members shall be restored to membership when deemed appropriate by the Council of Elders and reinstated in accordance with the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

5.4 Sojourn's members agree to submit any legal dispute with the church for mediation before a mutually agreed-upon mediator, or if none can be agreed upon, one selected by Peace Maker Ministries. Lawsuits between believers are contrary to biblical and church teaching, and mediation is an effort to resolve disputes in a biblical manner (1 Cor 6: 1-7). Mediation will be governed by the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation (ICC Rules), unless modified as stipulated by the parties. In particular, subject to the more detailed provisions of the ICC Rules, mediator(s) will attempt to assist us in reaching a voluntary settlement of any disputes through mediation. The confidentiality of the mediation process will be protected, and these matters will not be discussed with people who do not have a necessary interest in them. If settlement can be agreed upon, the conciliators may, at their discretion, issue an advisory opinion. Neither the opinion, nor any communications exchanged in the mediation process, will be admissible for any purpose in any subsequent legal proceeding.

Article 6 – Church Discipline

6.1 The purpose of church discipline is fourfold: (1) to aid in conforming us individually and corporately to Christ, for the glory of God and the purity and unity of his church (Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 10:31), (2) to help bring a wandering soul back to Christ (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1- 5), (3) to help deter others from sin (1 Tim. 5:20), and (4) to help protect the church from false teachers, metaphorical wolves, and division (Acts 20:25-31; Titus 1:10-11).

6.2 The Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for (1) divisiveness (Titus 3:9-11, Romans 16:17-18, Hebrews 13:17), (2) scandalous or unrepentant immorality (1 Corinthians 5:9-11, 6:9-10, Exodus 20:12-17), and (3) rejecting essential doctrines of the faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20, 6:3-5, 2 John 9-11). Church discipline is entrusted to the Council of Elders and shall follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:7-8; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10-11; and 2 John 7-11.

6.3 Matthew 18:15-16 outlines the biblical process of reconciliation between individuals. The process is summarized in four progressive steps: (1) seek private reconciliation (Matthew 18:15), (2) if the person refuses to listen, involve select others (Matthew 18:16), (3) if the person refuses to listen, inform the Council of Elders (Matthew 18:17a), and (4) if the person refuses to listen, treat the unrepentant person as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17b).

6.4 Discipline is an effort to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from unrepentant sin. Discipline may involve exclusion from participation in ministry and communion, as well as dismissal from the fellowship of this church. An individual may be disciplined by the Council of Elders short of dismissal from the fellowship, as they deem appropriate for the specific circumstance. The Council of Elders, as is required by Scripture, may report to the congregation the names of those who have lost membership by reason of church discipline, and the reason for that discipline, as described in Matthew 18:15-20.

6.5 In joining Sojourn, all members agree that these methods of church discipline shall provide the sole remedy for any dispute arising against the church and its agents, and they waive their right to file any legal action against the church in a civil court or agency.

6.6 Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion of the Council of Elders: (1) a member, a regular attendee, or other individual may be prohibited from the church premises and church functions for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others, and (2) members who have not attended a Sunday Gathering or Neighborhood Parish Gathering under the leadership of Sojourn for a consecutive period of six months may be removed from the membership roll.

Article 7 - Indemnification

7.1 Sojourn reserves the right to indemnify any Elder, officer, member, or other person to the maximum extent provided by the TBOC but is under no obligation to indemnify.

7.2 Sojourn shall have the freedom to expand its corporate powers to the fullest extent permitted by applicable law. If the TBOC is amended in the future to expand or increase the power of the corporation to indemnify, to pay expenses in advance of final disposition, to enter into contracts or to expand or increase any similar or related power, then, without any further requirement of action by the corporation or any other person, the powers described in this Article shall be expanded and increased to the fullest extent permitted by the applicable provisions or the TBOC or other applicable law.

7.3 Notwithstanding any of the foregoing provisions, Sojourn shall indemnify and hold harmless any person who is or was a Director or Elder of the church, and pay expenses in advance of final disposition of a proceeding, to the full extent to which Sojourn is empowered.

7.4 To the extent the rights of indemnification and advancement of expenses have been conferred by or pursuant to this Article, such rights shall be contract rights.

7.5 The rights reserved hereunder as to indemnification and advancement of expenses shall not be exclusive of any other right which any person may have or acquire under any statute, provision of the Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws of the corporation, agreement of disinterested Directors, or otherwise.

7.6 Sojourn may purchase and maintain insurance, at its expense, to protect itself and any current or former Director, officer, employee or agent of Sojourn against any expense, liability, or loss, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify such person against such expense, liability, or loss under the TBOC.

7.7 Any repeal or modification of this Article shall not adversely affect any right of any person existing at the time of such repeal or modification.

7.8 If any provision of this Article or any application thereof shall be invalid, unenforceable, or contrary to applicable law, the remainder of this Article, or the application of such provision to persons or circumstances other than those as to which it is held invalid, unenforceable, or contrary to applicable law, shall not be affected thereby and shall continue in full force and effect.

7.9 For purposes of this Article, "applicable law" shall at all times be construed as the applicable law in effect at the date indemnification may be sought, or the law in effect at the date of the action, omission, or other event giving rise to the situation for which indemnification may be sought, whichever is selected by the person seeking indemnification.

Article 8 - Finances and Conflicts of Interest

8.1 The fiscal year of the corporation shall be January 1 through December 31. Details regarding all financial operations are delineated within Sojourn's Financial Policies and Procedures, attached hereto as Exhibit B. [These policies are currently under construction. If you'd like to see them, please contact a staff member.]

8.2 Sojourn's annual budget may be amended in three ways: (1) reallocation, (2) adjustment for growth, and (3) expansion. The budget may be amended by reallocation of funds from one account to another by a majority vote of the Council of Elders. The budget may be adjusted for growth by a majority vote of the Council of Elders if giving exceeds the amount estimated in the annual budget. The budget may be expanded by a majority vote of the Council of Elders should the Council determine that a new budget item is required or a particular ministry department has outgrown its current budget allocation.

8.3 Whenever a Director or officer has a financial or personal interest in any matter coming before the Council of Elders, the affected person shall (1) fully disclose the nature of the interest and (2) withdraw from discussion, lobbying, and voting on the matter. Any transaction or vote involving a potential conflict of interest shall be approved only when a majority of disinterested Directors determine that it is in the best interest of the corporation to do so. The minutes of meetings at which such votes are taken shall record such disclosure, abstention and rationale for approval.

Article 9 – Employment

9.1 The corporation will not discriminate in employment policies for reasons of race, religion, or sex, except in those situations that are necessary so as to not hurt the purposes for which Sojourn is formed, and only as is in accordance with law. Details on all issues pertaining to employment will be delineated within Sojourn’s Employee Handbook.

Article 10 - Rules of Order

10.1 The current edition of Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure by Alice Sturgis shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by these by-laws.

Article 11 - Amendments

11.1 The corporation may amend, revise, add to, repeal or rescind these bylaws and/or adopt new bylaws at will by a 3/4 vote of the Council of Elders, provided that notice of the proposed alteration is given at least thirty days prior to the vote.

Article 12 - Compensation

12.1 No compensation shall be paid to Elders unless a resolution authorizing such remuneration shall have been adopted by Sojourn before the services were rendered. The Council of Elders has the freedom to hire office staff, but members are to be informed of such decisions. All staffing costs are reflected in the annual budget. For more details pertaining to compensation, please see Sojourn’s Employee Handbook and Financial Policies and Procedures.

Article 13 - Dissolution

13.1 The dissolution of Sojourn must be approved by a 3/4 vote of the Council of Elders, and all such procedures must be in keeping with Sojourn’s governing documents and applicable state law. In the event that Sojourn dissolves, all remaining assets of Sojourn must be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Code Section 501(c)(3), or such corresponding Code section added in the future, to an exempt entity under Code Section 501(c)(3), or such corresponding Code section added in the future. The recipient entity of such a distribution must be determined by a 3/4 majority vote of the Council of Elders.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

THE SOJOURN COLLECTIVE

This membership covenant is birthed out of our love for Jesus, His bride the Church, the people of Sojourn, and our common mission to join the Father, Son, and Spirit in the historic work of redemption. The purpose of this document is to clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for Sojourn's members and leaders. We pray it also serves as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

God has always purposed to call a people unto Himself, a people to whom He would reveal Himself, and through whom He would reveal Himself to the world. The local church exists for the display of the glory of God.

Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel message is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel carries with it the promise of an ultimate renewal even more glorious than Eden, which is why Christians eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. Those of us who trust and follow Jesus are caught up in a story much larger than ourselves. We, the Church, have been graciously invited to participate with God as the means through which He is fulfilling His redemptive purposes (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

The opportunity to join a local church body is therefore much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement; it is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2,9), and the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon the mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:3-8). So contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need one another.

WHAT IS MEMBERSHIP?

Membership at Sojourn is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. To the extent that we're united to Christ, we're united to one another. We covenant together, therefore, as a community of faith on a common mission. We covenant as brothers and sisters to mutually care for one another and to saturate our neighborhood with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God and the good of our

neighbors. We covenant with one another to edify one another in the gospel, to grow in knowing one another more deeply, to speak hard things graciously, to identify and grow in our respective roles and giftings, to extend grace and understanding to one another when in tension, and to seek reconciliation when we find ourselves in conflict.

In marriage, the unending covenant to love no matter the circumstances (“for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health”) creates an environment whereby the relationship can truly thrive. Married couples need the freedom to be imperfect. Although their actions still have consequences, they know the joy and security of resting in a mutual resolution to love one another. Churches are very similar. In essence, Sojourn’s Covenant Members resolve to love one another for better or for worse. We should all feel free to expect a long-suffering commitment from our brothers and sisters in covenant. This is a very difficult, very beautiful thing!

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

A covenant is a written agreement or promise between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action. Within Scripture, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), while others are solely between men (1 Samuel 18; 2 Samuel 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God’s covenant with the Church is an example of the former, this local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

Sojourn’s membership covenant contains several conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. Such requirements (submission to the Scriptures, pursuit of holiness, stewardship of resources, etc.) are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of the local church. Accordingly, this covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgement of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties for God’s glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

However, if at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, the member is freed from his or her membership obligations in light of the church’s disobedience and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere. Apart from covenant unfaithfulness, there exist other circumstances that may provide sufficient and righteous grounds for transfer of membership.

CONFESSION OF FAITH & BYLAWS

As a community of Christian faith, we are bound by the headship of Jesus Christ, our common doctrinal confession, and the grace that we extend toward one another in holding that confession with humility.

By signing this covenant, you indicate that you (1) have read the Sojourn Confession of Faith in its entirety, (2) are in full agreement with orthodox Christian doctrine as outlined within the Nicene Creed, and (3) willingly submit to the doctrines articulated within the Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement and the Acts 29 Doctrinal Distinctives. You also agree to diligently preserve unity and peace in submission to church leadership and teaching, spurning divisive language and actions with regard to the theological positions delineated within Sojourn's Confession of Faith.

In addition, by signing this covenant, you indicate that you (1) have read Sojourn's Bylaws in their entirety, and (2) willingly submit to the policies and principles of government delineated therein.

THE ELDERS COVENANT...

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with humbly protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the church body and her individual members. The following is an overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures:

- to appoint elders and deacons according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
- to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- to set an example for and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

I COVENANT...

The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible, non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the grace-driven obedience that faith produces. The following is an overview of the requirements for covenant members:

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- to pursue personal intimacy with God through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the sacraments prescribed to His Church: (1) by being baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and (2) by regularly communing with Jesus and His bride through the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-25; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
- to participate in the life of Sojourn by regularly attending Sunday Gatherings, engaging deeply with a Neighborhood Parish family, and serving the body faithfully in accordance with my gifting (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14 1 Peter 2:9-12).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to pursue holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 4:1-3).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by: (1) humbly following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another (the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration) and (2) receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- to confess my sin to God and to fellow believers, repenting and seeking help as I put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church, diligently striving for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).
- to do the following when I leave the church for righteous reasons: (1) notify the elders in writing and (2) seek another church in which I can carry out my biblical obligations as a follower of Christ.

MY COVENANT

I have read Sojourn's Bylaws and Confession of Faith in their entirety, I have been (or plan to be) baptized, and I commit to live as a diligent, faithful disciple of Jesus.

I understand that this covenant obligates me to the members of Sojourn and serves as an acknowledgment of my submission to the elders of the church. I accept the responsibility to notify the elders if at any time I can no longer fulfill the obligations of this covenant, if I plan to find some other covenant community, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the church's covenantal obligations delineated herein.

Printed Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____ **DOB:** _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Family: _____

Parish Leader _____
Signatures

Have you been baptized? Yes No