

# Covenant Membership

**LIVING STONES CHURCH**



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# LS STORY, VISION, & VALUES

## THE LIVING STONES STORY

Living Stones was started by Harvey Turner as a Bible study in Reno, NV, in 1998. Many of Harvey's friends had no interest in attending church, so he started the Bible study to bring the Word of God to them. The study became popular with college-aged students who were hungry for community and the gospel of Jesus. Over time, it grew to about forty people packed into multiple rooms in a two-story house. Seeing this movement, Grace Church in Northwest Reno opened its doors for Living Stones to start evening worship gatherings on Friday nights. These worship gatherings quickly grew to a few hundred people and experienced many baptisms.

In affirmation of God's blessing and work of renewal, Grace sent out Living Stones in 2009 to start as a separate church. In 2011, Living Stones multiplied to its second congregation. Since then, our family of churches has grown to nine congregations across Northern Nevada.

## THE NAME "LIVING STONES"

The name "Living Stones" comes from 1 Peter 2:4-5, which says,

*"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

These verses are an illustration explaining the church as the new temple or dwelling place of God. Jesus is the Living Stone, or foundation stone, upon which the entire church is built. Every person who believes in Jesus becomes like him and becomes a living stone. When stacked together these living stones make up the "spiritual house" or temple, the place where God is present.

This passage also informs our philosophy in ministry. It describes the church doing three things:

"come to him" - this happens as we gather in **Sunday Worship Gatherings**

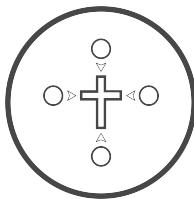
"be built up" - this happens as we live life together through **Community Groups**

"be a holy priesthood" - this happens as we live life on **Mission**. The priests were people who brought God to people and people to God. That is our mission.

## WHY DO WE EXIST?

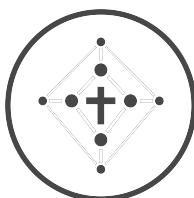
**Helping everyone find everything in Jesus.**

Northern Nevada is one of the least churched places in the United States resulting in very few people knowing and worshiping Jesus. In the history of the world there has never been an intentional church planting movement in our area. We pray and work to see that change in our lifetime and are praying for God to bring revival.



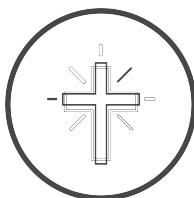
### We strive to make outsiders insiders

Like Jesus, Living Stones does everything possible to make outsiders insiders in the Kingdom of God. We make it our aim to remove all obstacles that would block people from knowing Jesus. We also intentionally pursue outcasts and irreligious people who do not normally feel comfortable in church settings. No one should be blocked from the gospel and the opportunity to be reconciled to God.



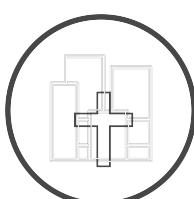
### We are Disciples Making Disciples

Disciples are people who follow Jesus, find their identity in Him, and enjoy relationship with God. Part of following Jesus means we invest our whole life to help others grow spiritually as they learn to know, love, and follow Him too. According to Jesus, discipling is not only the job of pastors and deacons, it is the job of every believer. Every follower of Jesus at Living Stones is expected to use their gifts to make disciples.



### Unity in Diversity

The church of God is to be a house of prayer and worship for all peoples and ethnicities. This is the heart of God and will be fully displayed around His throne in heaven. Our prayer is for the diversity of our cities (age, ethnicity, subculture, political affiliation, marital status, socio-economic status, etc.) to be represented and integrated in every level and function of our churches.



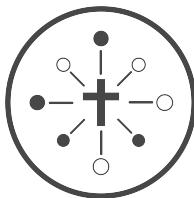
### In the City, for the City

Living Stones wants to be a blessing to cities rather than a burden. Like God with his people, we want to be for our cities, not against them. There are three ways we exercise this value:

*Physically* - by being present to care for physical needs of the hurting and underprivileged in our city.

*Culturally* - by participating in and shaping what is good and beautiful in the culture of our city.

*Spiritually* - by praying for and guiding people toward the freedom and fulfillment that can only be found in Jesus through the proclamation of His gospel.



### Churches Planting Churches

Church planting is the most effective way to see people come to the knowledge and love of Christ. Since the church is the temple of God, church planting is God's plan to bring His presence to the ends of the earth. We are constantly seeking to raise up new leaders and send out more church plants. We invest 10% of our money every year into church planting throughout the United States and the world.

## THE LS FAMILY OF CHURCHES

At Living Stones, we believe we can do more together as a family of churches in Northern Nevada than we would be able to do as independent churches. Currently there are nine LS Churches located in Reno, South Reno, North Valleys, Sparks, Carson City, Fernley, Elko, Winnemucca, and Downtown Sparks.

Each LS church is united together in doctrine, vision, values, relationships, and Elder accountability. Each church has its own board of governing Elders, who operate under the authority of the LS Family board of Elders. There is a small LS corporate staff who seeks to serve and help the operations of the LS Family and each LS local church.

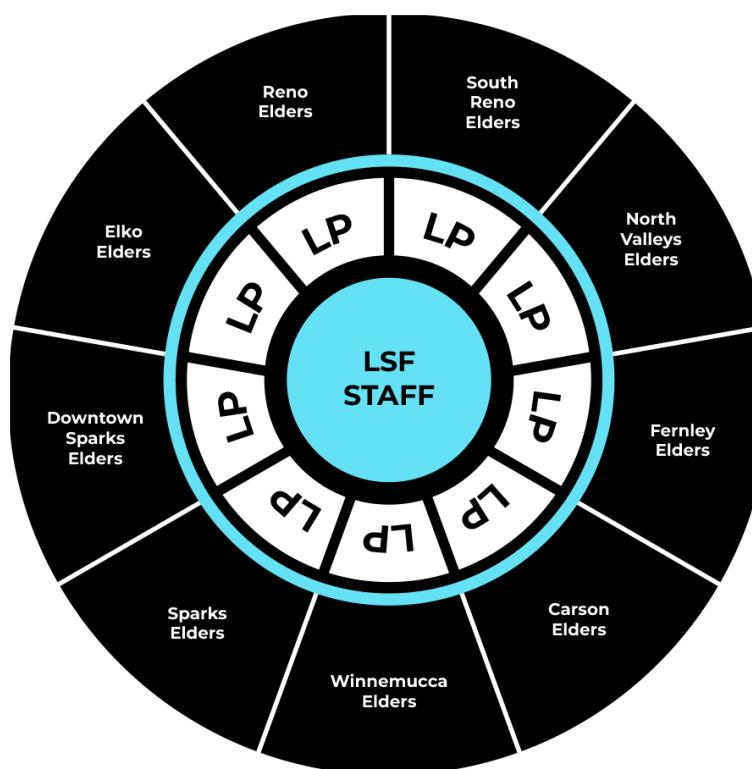
Here's how the LS Family of churches is structured:

**The LS Family Elders** govern the **LS Family** (Lead Pastors from each location).

**The LSF Staff** serves the **LS Family**.

**The LS Family Elders** are held accountable by the **LSF Full Council of Elders** (every Elder from each church).

**Local church Elders** lead each LS local church.



## WHAT IS COVENANT MEMBERSHIP?

### Group Activity

At your table discuss the following questions. Write a few observations below as your answers.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20. According to this passage,

### WHAT IS A MEMBER?

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According to your own knowledge, and your understanding of the Bible,

### WHAT IS A COVENANT?

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Read Acts 16:30-31.

### WHAT IS REQUIRED TO BE A MEMBER OF CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL CHURCH?

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## COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

The word “membership” simply means you belong to something. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the church as Jesus’ body with him as the head of the body. When a person becomes a Christian, they belong to Jesus AND his body. This is to be expressed in membership at a local church. Just as the body cannot function properly with missing parts, the church suffers when Christians do not participate in membership. Further still, just as a body part cannot continue to live if it is no longer connected to the body, a Christian’s relationship with God will significantly deteriorate if he or she is not connected as a member of a local church.

The word “covenant” can be defined as a *commitment between two parties, that is founded in love, and is not intended to be broken*. Covenant members at a local church are committed to each other in love. The church, and its leadership, is committed to serve and care for the members, as the members are committed to serve and care for the church.

### **What does it take to belong to the Universal (global and everlasting) Body of Christ?**

The answer to this is simple: **Faith Alone**. All that is needed to belong to the Body of Christ is *real faith* in the *real Jesus*. When the Philippian Jailer in Acts 16 asked, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” Therefore, saving faith has two components:

1. To believe that you are a sinner in need of salvation, and that Jesus Christ alone has entered human history to grant you that salvation through his life, death, and resurrection.
2. To surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. It means to have Jesus as your new Lord, or King of your life.

These two components of saving faith are inseparable. Many want Jesus to be their Savior, but they do not want him to be their King. Others are fine with Jesus being their Lord and telling them how to live, but they do not want to admit their utter need for a Savior and that their good works account for nothing in salvation. Saving faith, on the other hand, happens when one says “I need Jesus to be my Savior, and I surrender to him as my Lord.” This faith will display itself in many acts of love and righteousness, but nothing else is needed to belong to the Body of Christ as a Christian, simply *Faith Alone*.

### **Membership Summary**

With the above information, membership at a local church involves three things:

- 1. Belief in Christian doctrine (Saving Faith)**
- 2. Desire to be a member of the flock (community)**
- 3. Active participation in the Body**

These three elements will be unpacked in the following pages.

## BELIEF IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

### **Must Believe**

All that is necessary to become a Christian is saving faith in the true Jesus.  
(see John 3:36; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16-17, 10:9; Eph. 2:8-9)

### **Must not reject**

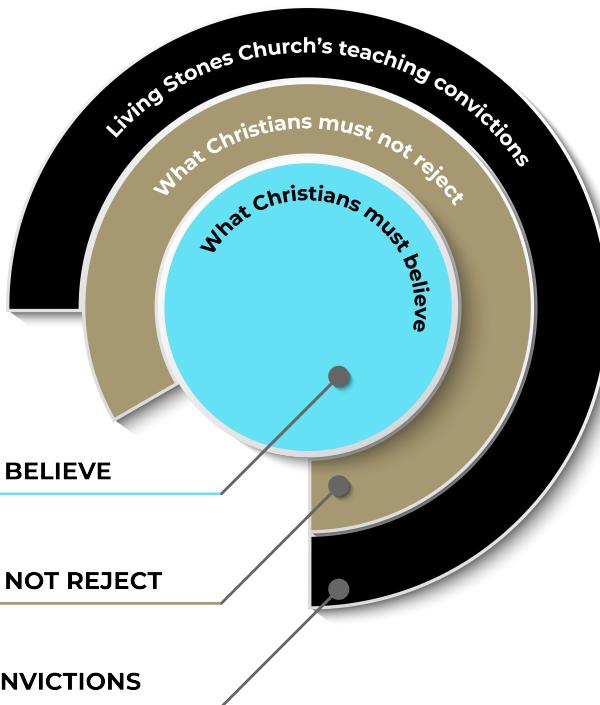
As someone grows in their understanding of the Bible they will learn more truths about God and the Christian faith that *must* be embraced. These truths include the doctrine of the Trinity, the authority of the Bible, the Great Commandment, and more. These doctrines are clearly taught in the Bible and must not be rejected. At times, people may wrestle with or even experience personal doubt about these doctrines, which is a normal experience of faith, but at the end of the day they must not be rejected by a person who wishes to adhere to orthodox Christianity.

### **LS teaches and thinks people should believe:**

Furthermore, there are some doctrines within orthodox Christianity that churches have differing opinions on according to their convictions and interpretation of the Bible. These doctrines include the active work of the Holy Spirit in the present age, the order and nature of salvation, the role of men and women in leadership in the home and church, and more. Living Stones has strong convictions about these doctrines, as should all churches, and will teach these convictions in all ministry environments. Christians are welcome to be members at Living Stones even if they do not adhere to LS convictions, but they must be okay with Living Stones teaching these convictions, and be willing to not stir up division if they disagree.

## BELIEF IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE DIAGRAM

See next page for a visual representation of these categories.



## MUST BELIEVE

### **Jesus is God and our only Lord and Savior**

(John 3:36, 14:6, 17:3; Acts 4:12, 10:43; Rom. 10:9; 1 Tim. 2:5)

## MUST NOT REJECT

**Apostles' Creed** (p 14) • **Nicene Creed** (p 15) • **The Bible is inerrant & authoritative Word of God** (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21) • **10 Commandments** (Ex. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17-19)

**Great Commandment** (Matt. 22:36-40) • **Doctrine of Imago Dei** (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18-23)

**Gender** - God made mankind male and female (Gen. 1:27, 2:22-24)

**Sexuality** - God beautifully designed and intends his people to participate in sex only within the union of marriage between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:1-9; Rom. 1:26-28)

## LIVING STONES TEACHING CONVICTIONS

**The 1689 Baptist Confession is our teaching doctrinal statement** exceptions: 22.8, 26.4, 26.9.

**66 book Canon** 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3 • **Gospel-centered** Luke 24:44-48

**Believer's baptism** Acts 2:38; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:26-27 • **God's sovereignty in every aspect of salvation** (Reformed soteriology) John 6:37; Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-6

**Continuationism** Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12,14; Eph. 4:11-16

**Complementarian leadership in the church & the home** Gen. 1-2; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; Ti. 2:2-6

**Elder-ruled, Deacon-led, & Member-served** 1 Tim. 3:2-13; Ti. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5

**We are a family of churches** whereby the local Elders of each church lead under the authority of the Living Stones Family Elders, made up of the Lead Pastors from each LS church.

## MEMBER PARTICIPATION

### HOW WILL YOU BE DISCIPLED AT LIVING STONES?

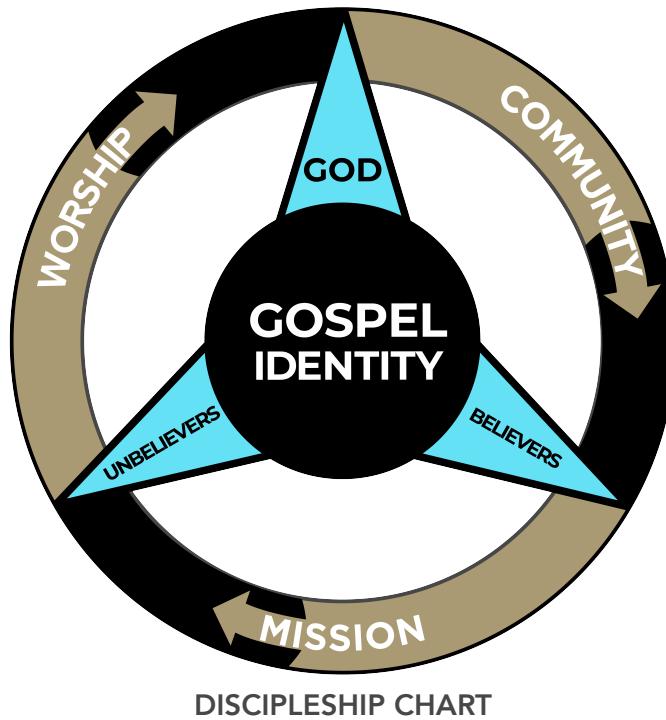
In Matthew 28:16-18, the resurrected Jesus said,

*"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to obey all my commands. And behold, I will be with you until the end of age."*

This is what the church is called to do: **Be Disciples Making Disciples**

**A disciple of Jesus is someone who**

- Has a **gospel identity** that is found in Jesus and what he has done for them.
- Lives in **gospel relationships** with God, believers, and unbelievers.
- Lives in **gospel rhythms** of worship, community, and mission.



**This means Living Stones will disciple its members to participate in the five following ways:**

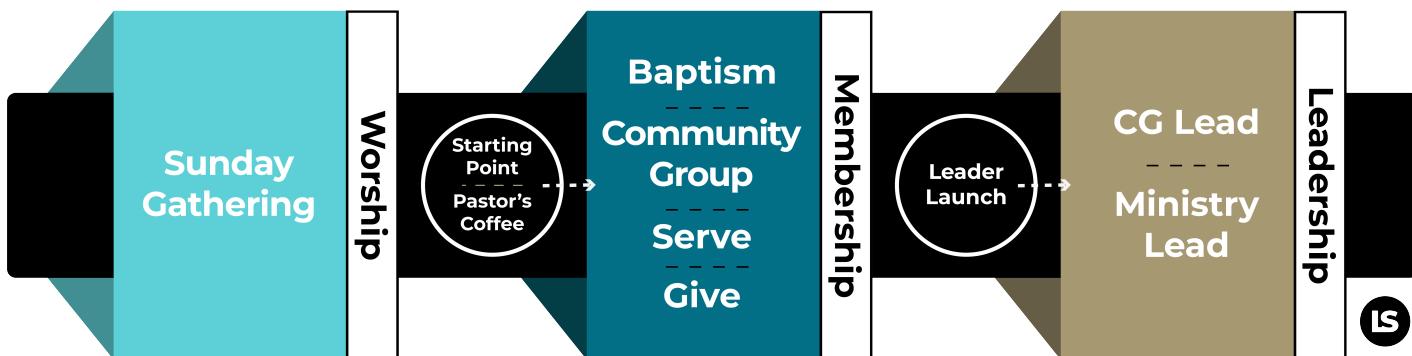
1. Christian Baptism
2. Weekly Worship Gathering participation and partaking in the Lord's Supper
3. Community Group involvement
4. Serving the church body and the city
5. Regular and joy-filled financial tithes and offerings

We understand that participation in some of these practices may take some time and may vary according to special circumstances of life, but members of Living Stones are expected to work towards active participation in these rhythms as taught by the Bible.

## PATHWAYS TO INVOLVEMENT

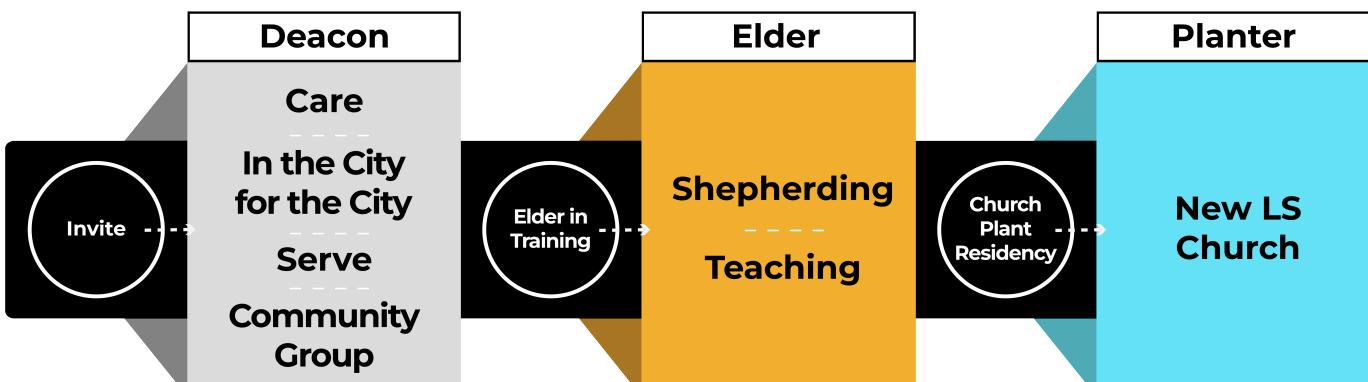
When someone walks through the door at Living Stones, we want to make it as straightforward as possible for them to get connected and fully integrated into membership as a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, each Living Stones church seeks to move people through three stages of involvement: Worship, Membership, and Leadership.

The easiest step for most people to take after attending Worship Gathering is Starting Point/Pastor's Coffee, a monthly class that connects newcomers. Before someone becomes a member, they must join a Community Group, get baptized (if they have not already), serve, and start giving. Healthy Covenant Members may then pursue leadership. The primary places to lead are in Community Groups and volunteer ministries. Every church offers a stage-one leadership training program called Leader Launch to develop these leaders.



## PATHWAYS TO DEACON, ELDERSHIP, & CHURCH PLANTER

Additionally, Living Stones has established pathways for those who sense that God is calling them to serve as Deacons, Elders, or Church Planters.



**Elder in Training** is a 1-2 year-long process to develop potential Elders.

**Church Plant Residency** is a process for the development of church planters.

## LIVING STONES COVENANT

### **IT MEANS THE ELDERS COMMIT TO:**

- Living by example and in obedience to all that the Bible commands
- Praying for you when you are sick or unwell
- Shepherding and caring for you
- Teaching you the Word of God and pointing to you to the gospel of Jesus
- Equipping you for the work of the ministry
- Providing Godly counsel, wisdom, and when necessary, discipline

### **IT MEANS YOU COMMIT TO:**

- Following Jesus, striving to walk in obedience and repentance as described in the Bible
- Showing up and participating as an active member of the local church (living in the rhythms of worship, community, and mission)
- Using your gifts and resources to glorify God through the church
- Loving one another as described by the Bible
- Following and submitting to the Elders as long as the Elders are submitting to and following Jesus and the Bible

## THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy universal Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

## NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## INERRANCY

As defined by the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's Divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.



## NEXT STEPS TO BECOME A MEMBER

### Option 1:

I am not interested in becoming a Living Stones member at this time.

### Option 2:

I am interested in becoming a Living Stones member. Fill out or check all that apply:

I believe that Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

I do not reject orthodox Christian doctrine.

I was baptized at a Bible-believing Christian church.

I would like to get baptized.

I am in a Community Group. List who's group and when

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I am serving in \_\_\_\_\_ ministry.

I would like to start serving but need help determining where.

I am tithing regularly. (If you have questions about this, feel free to talk to a pastor at your pastor follow-up meeting.)

I participate in the worship gathering on average \_\_\_\_\_ times a month.

I have questions that I would like to ask a pastor before becoming a member.

## **PASTORAL MEETING**

This is a quick 30 minute meeting in which you can ask any questions and can receive any further help you need for membership.

Please list your contact information below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## **BEST DAYS/TIMES TO MEET**

Please list the best days and times to meet with a pastor regarding Covenant Membership:

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Scan the QR code with your  
smartphone camera  
to go to the LS website

**LIVING STONES CHURCH**