
PARTNERSHIP MEMBER GUIDE

DISCOVER > CONNECT > PARTNER



THE
PARISH
CHURCH

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An Introduction to Partnership

Hebrews 1:1-4 (ESV)

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 2:8-10 (ESV)

8 Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. 9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

*“There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence
over which Christ does not cry ‘Mine!’”
- Abraham Kuyper*

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

The kingdom of God is anywhere the rule and reign of Jesus Christ is expressed and enjoyed.

The church is the community of all true believers for all of time. It is the collection of all people who have been reconciled to God through the work of Jesus. The church is a family of people who have been adopted as sons and daughters of the one true King. The Church is a collection of all followers of Christ.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CLASS

We are looking at the: identity, value, and practices of The Parish in order to help you evaluate whether or not you want to step in to a more formalized engagement with the mission and vision God has placed on The Parish Church.



While many churches use the word *membership*, The Parish has instead chose to use the word *partnership*. We use the term *partner* because we believe that it will require the partnership of all our church body to accomplish the mission that God has given us.

A conviction is a firmly held belief that is not easily conceded. Through much prayer and submission to God's Word, the leaders of our church have clarified eight explicit convictions that will help you to understand who we are, what we value, and what we do as The Parish Church.

WE ARE:

1. Committed to Covenant Community
2. Ruled by God's Word
3. Empowered by the Holy Spirit
4. Reliant on Prayer
5. Christ-centered in Focus
6. Relentless in Mission
7. Ethnic Harmony
8. Devoted to Equipping the Saints

Session 1: Committed to Covenant Community

Session 2: Ruled by God's Word

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Reliant on Prayer

Session 3: Christ-centered in Focus

Relentless in Mission

Session 4: Ethnic Harmony

Devoted to Equipping the Saints

Session 5: Final Considerations + Q&A

Session 1:

**COMMITTED TO COVENANT
COMMUNITY**



A Theology of Covenant Community

Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)

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

Acts 4:32-34 (ESV)

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

Looking at these passages, what were some of the regular activities that the members of the early church were engaged in together?

What did the early church believers experience together when they did these things?

Think about the way that each person in the early church related to one another and the ways they were involved in each other's lives, seeing God do amazing things together. What does it mean to have "all things in common?"

What do you think it means to have a shared or common identity with another person?

Can you think of someone that you have a shared identity with? What would you say is the common identity that you share?

John 14:16-26 (ESV)

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. 20 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father. I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Who is Jesus talking about in verse 20?

What do you think it means to "be one" with one another?

Why is love for one another important in the life of a local body of believers?

What are some things that are contrary to love that would hinder us from the mission?

What is gossip? Can you think of some ways that gossip would hinder the mission of the church?

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 3:12-15 (ESV)

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Are there ever times in your life where you feel like it is easier to avoid Christian community rather than participate in it? What are some of the factors in your life that can lead you to feel this way?

From the passages we just read, what are the dangers of living separate from Christian community?

At The Parish, we believe that consistent involvement in community is imperative for the health of your soul. Through different seasons of life, you will feel a temptation to eject from opening yourself up to other broken people. When we are hurting, we often fear that no one will understand us, or if they do, that they will be horrified by what they see. While this feeling is understandable, it fails to recognize God's plan for community. He has made it that people will function better together.

At The Parish, we also believe that consistent involvement in community is imperative for the health of other people's souls. You are needed. God says that without your participation, the body of Christ will suffer. God has spiritually gifted you in unique and essential ways, so your participation in community is vital for the flourishing of those around you. To eject from community is not just to damage your own soul. It's to cripple the body of Christ as well.



HOW THIS IS LIVED OUT AT THE PARISH CHURCH

ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP RENEWAL

Annual Partnership Renewal is a chance to assess what the Lord is doing in your life before renewing your covenant with each other. It is saying that to the best of your ability to discern the next year of your life, you are renewing a covenant with this community of believers.

MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

Missional Community is a community of Christians on God's mission in obedience to the Holy Spirit that demonstrates the kingdom tangibly and declares the gospel of Jesus Christ creatively to a specific pocket of people or neighborhood.

COMMITTING AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE PARISH

Simply put, if it were not for the faithful participation of our partners, Sunday gatherings would not happen. We believe that God has given each person unique expressions of His grace through various talents, giftings, and passions for the sake of serving one another and glorifying God. When we volunteer our time and talents, we display our commitment to covenant community.

BENEVOLENCE

There is almost no limit to which our church won't go in order to ensure that there is not a needy person among us.



Partnership Agreements

Partnership is a commitment to participate in covenant community. Becoming a partner at our church is a formalized first step towards uniting your values with the expressed shared values of church leadership and other covenanting partners in this body of believers. A partner is different than a casual attender in our church in several distinct ways. More than just a title, a partner is asked to agree to several specific things. So, in light of our discussion today, let's look at what all partners at The Parish are committing to.

Because we are committed to covenant community, partners at The Parish agree to:

1. Actively participate in biblical community that provides accountability with other believers and aligns with the mission of The Parish.

Missional Communities are one of the primary ways we shepherd our church body to be faithful disciples of Jesus and to grow toward Christ-likeness. The rhythms of Missional Community that we have outlined help ensure accountability to the basic disciplines of the Christian faith. And a few times a year, we will work through content together under the direction of our leadership to keep our entire church aligned.

In some cases, partners may not be able to participate in a Missional Community at The Parish, but will pursue biblical community through other means.

2. Engage primarily through regular attendance and service

Partners at The Parish are asked to commit to regularly attend Sunday Gatherings. This doesn't mean that partners are permanently bound to every Sunday. Rather, this means that partners should seek to be familiar faces at The Parish, knowing their leadership and other partners. A covenant community will not exist if people are inconsistently meeting together.

Additionally, all partners commit to serving at least once a month in a specific role on a Sunday Gathering team. The exception to this is when partners are highly involved in other forms of service through the church, like leading Missional Communities or leading in non-Sunday programs.

3. Refrain from speaking or acting in a manner that would weaken the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ

Augustine, a second-century theologian and early church father, famously hung a sign on the wall of his dining room that read:

“Whoever speaks an evil word of an absent man or woman is not welcome at this table.”

Gossip is cancer to unity. It is not only hurtful to the individual, it is hurtful to the testimony of the church. Gossip has no place in carrying out the mission of Christ in our church. In order to discern if something is gossip, ask yourself if it is true, necessary, and beneficial. If it isn't, then it is probably dangerous to the unity of the Spirit and should be avoided.

Every day, churches around the world are dying from the cancer of disunity within their church. Therefore, partners at The Parish agree to submit themselves to the accountability of other partners and can expect to be disciplined if they speak or act in a manner that weakens the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ.

4. Submit to the care and direction of the elders of The Parish knowing they are charged by God with the responsibility of leading, feeding, and protecting our partners

The Parish is a church that is led by a team of people known as elders. More will be said in the final session on the specific qualifications and roles that elders are required to fulfill, but partners are asked to submit to pastoral care and direction of the elders, which means when something is amiss in our lives, we seek out their guidance, help, and wisdom.

NOTES:

QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE FINAL SESSION: