

Church Covenant (Part 1)
Foundations
Jan. 27, 2019

I. What is a church covenant?

John Piper writes that it is good to have a church covenant even if church covenants aren't in the Bible. He says, *"The Bible does not say explicitly, 'Thou shalt have a written church covenant,' any more than it says, 'Thou shalt have marriage licenses,' or, 'Thou shalt have wedding rings.'"* Piper goes on to say, *"One way to look at it is that a church **without** a covenant is like a marriage without vows. Marriage vows are not spelled out in the Bible just like church covenants aren't. Both follow necessarily from the nature of the relationships."*

A church covenant can be described in five different ways:

1. A church covenant is a _____.

2. A church covenant is a _____ of how we agree to live.

3. A church covenant is a sign of _____.

4. A church covenant is an _____.

Charles Deweese wrote a helpful book entitled *Baptist Church Covenants*. In it he writes: *"A church covenant is a series of written pledges based on the Bible which church members voluntarily make to God and to one another regarding their basic moral and spiritual commitments and the practice of their faith. A covenant mainly deals with conduct (although it contains some doctrinal elements) . . . The basic meaning of the church covenant resides in the divine/human relationships in the context of the church membership."*

5. A church covenant is a _____.

A church covenant is essential for a church that practices Biblical church discipline.

II. Why have a church covenant?

A church covenant answers question: *what does it mean to be a member of Grand Avenue Baptist Church?*

Dr. Matt Capps writes:

“Membership covenants help clarify the expectations of membership by providing a biblical standard of behavior and educating individuals on what it means to be a member of a local church. Generally speaking, a church membership covenant is a ‘commitment to God and to one another as to how we will live out our faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ A church membership covenant is a reflection of the local church’s understanding of what the Bible teaches and expects of Christians associated with a local church. While many churches have a statement of faith that articulates their theological convictions, a church membership covenant functions to articulate how those beliefs are to be lived out within the local body. In the words of many theologians, a membership covenant is the ‘ethical counterpart to a church’s doctrinal statement.’”

Charles Deweese:

“Baptists worldwide have written and used hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of church covenants since initiating that development in England in the early 1600’s. They had viewed covenants, along with believer’s baptism and church discipline, as means of nurturing and safeguarding the New Testament emphasis on a regenerate church membership. Covenants deserve careful evaluation because they helped shape Baptist church membership standards and practices.”

Two important facts about church covenants.

- *First, church covenants have been an important aspect of Baptist history for over _____*
_____.
- *Secondly, the New Testament focuses on _____ church membership.*

How will a church covenant help our body?

1. _____ Members

2. _____ Efforts

3. _____ Mindset

4. _____

III. What does a church covenant say?

Expect it to be biblical – rooted in scripture. Expect it to be focused on the whole body of believers – it should be corporate not private. And expect it to be brief.

To help understand GABC's own church covenant we have divided it into three parts: First, the introduction; second, the promises; third, the benediction.

1. Introduction

a. First, the covenant is to be made by _____. Borrowing Jesus' words from the opening verses of Mark, the GABC's covenant is to be made by those who "repent and believe" in Jesus Christ.

b. Second, the covenant is to be made by _____ Christians. The church covenant is to be made by those who have been baptized upon their "profession of faith." In other words, those who have been baptized as believers.

c. Third, the covenant can only be kept with _____ - "we, in the presence of God and by His grace, joyfully and solemnly covenant with the members of Grand Avenue Baptist Church."

2. The Promises

- a. *We will faithfully remind one another of the _____ and _____ of Christ on our behalf.*
- b. *We will work and pray for the _____ of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
- c. *Exercise an affectionate _____ and _____ over each other and faithfully _____ and _____ one another as occasion may require.* Are we bearing each other's burdens? Are we praying for one another? Are we praying through the church directory? Are we looking out for each other? Are we challenging each other when we sin? Are we entreating one another to a holy walk? This is what it means to be a part of a church.
- d. *Rejoice at each other's _____.*
- e. *Bear each other's _____ and _____.*
- f. *Do not forsake the _____ of ourselves together.*
- g. *Strive to see GABC continue faithful, biblical _____.*
- h. _____ *the ministry of the church.*
- i. _____.
- j. *Live carefully in the world, denying _____ and worldly _____.*
- k. *Endeavor to practice _____ and _____ discipleship.*
- l. *We commit to practice _____ and _____ with one another.*
- m. *When we _____, we will unite with some other church.*

3. Benediction.

2 Cor. 13:14 concludes our church covenant.

Concluding thoughts on church covenant

A. Our church covenant is a _____ simply because there are times when living a godly life is hard.

B. Our church covenant is a _____.

Grand Avenue Baptist Church Covenant

Having been led, by divine grace, to repent of our sins and to believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior,¹ and having been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,² we, in the presence of God and by His grace, joyfully and solemnly covenant with the members of Grand Avenue Baptist Church.³

We endeavor to remember and to remind one another of Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins and risen from the dead.⁴

We endeavor to work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace⁵. We strive to walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁶ We endeavor to exercise affectionate care and watchfulness for each other, using our spiritual gifts for the common good,⁷ so that together we might live to God's glory⁸.

We endeavor to rejoice with each other's joys and bear each other's burdens with tenderness and sympathy.⁹ We strive to regularly encourage each other and pray for each other.¹⁰ When offenses occur, we stand ready to reconcile.¹¹ We endeavor to submit to the church's discipline and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline¹² of other members, as taught in Scripture.

We endeavor to meet together as a church body, faithfully participating in corporate worship and members meetings.¹³

We endeavor to continue a faithful biblical ministry in this church maintaining its worship, ordinances,¹⁴ discipline,¹⁵ and doctrines.¹⁶ To this end, we strive to contribute time and money cheerfully and regularly to support this church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.¹⁷

We endeavor by God's grace and power to live as Christ in the world, resisting ungodliness and worldly desires, leading holy lives, being honest in our dealings and faithful in our responsibilities and commitments.¹⁸

We endeavor to practice personal and family discipleship,¹⁹ training our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.²⁰

When we fail in any of these endeavors, we will strive to practice repentance and forgiveness.²¹

¹ John 3:3-8; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6.

² Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; Rom. 6:4.

³ Neh. 9:38; Amos 3:3; Titus 3:8; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:13-27; Heb. 3:12-14; Heb. 10:19-25.

⁴ Rom. 10:13-16; 1 Cor. 1:18; Col. 1:3-14; Heb. 3:12-14; Heb. 4:11-16; Heb. 10:19-25.

⁵ Eph. 2:11-22; Eph. 4:1-16, 29, 31; Gal. 5:16, 25.

⁶ Eph. 5:1.

⁷ Rom. 12:9-12; Eph. 4:9-32, Heb. 3:12-14; Heb. 10:19-25.

⁸ 1 Cor. 10:31.

⁹ John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:4-16.

¹⁰ Eph. 1:16; Eph. 6:18.

¹¹ Matt. 12:34-35; Eph. 4:29, 32; Col. 3:16, 4:6; James 3:2-12.

¹² Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:1-9, 2 Cor. 2:5-11, Titus 1:10-16.

¹³ Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:24-25.

¹⁴ Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:17-20; Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 11:23-32.

¹⁵ Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-9; Gal. 6:2; Titus 3:10.

¹⁶ Gal. 1:8-9; Rom. 16:17; 2 John 10.

¹⁷ Deut. 15:7-11; Prov. 3:9-10; Prov. 19:17; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 6:1-4; Matt. 28:18; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 12:33; 2 Cor. 9:7; Heb. 13:16.

¹⁸ Gal. 5:22-24; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Titus 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:14; Heb. 12:14.

¹⁹ Deut. 6:1-9; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 119:9-17; Luke 5:16; 1 Tim. 4:7-8.

²⁰ Deut. 6:7; Judges 2:10-11; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:20-21.

²¹ Eph. 4:32-5:2.

Should we leave this fellowship, we will seek to unite with another church where we can continue to carry out the spirit of this covenant.²²

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all²³.
Amen.

²² Acts 9:26; Acts 1:18:27; Rom. 16:1-2.

²³ 1 Cor. 13:14.